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THE GOSPEL STORY

A PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE

FOUR HOLY GOSPELS

CONTAINING THE NARRATIVE OF

OUR BLESSED LORD'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

BY THE

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THE GOSPEL STORY.

PART X.

THE LAST JOURNEY FROM GALILEE TO JERUSALEM.

236. *Before the last Passover.* St. John xi. 54, 55.

THE Gospel Story is now bringing us to the last months of the Lord's ministry. From the day of His going up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles the anger of the Jewish rulers had steadily increased against Him. He had offended them, vexed them, condemned them, by His frequent miracles on the Sabbath day, His defence of Himself and rebukes of them, His treatment of the woman taken in adultery and her accusers. He even calls them slaves of sin and children of the devil. At last He takes to Himself the title of Jehovah, I AM; declaring Himself to be before their father Abraham was born. He supports this claim by the fresh miracle of giving sight to the eyes which had never seen. On this and other miracles He continues to build up His bold claims, making Himself God. St. John x. 30-33. And finally, summoned to the sick bed of Lazarus, and arriving to find His friend four days dead and buried, He reproves Martha for

her imperfect faith in deeming that He needs to ask. He is the Resurrection and the Life, He says, Himself the very giver of Life. At the sepulchre, instead of asking He gives thanks to God, as His Father, for the power which is His. With the voice of authority He has bidden Lazarus come forth. And the dead man came forth.

These things cannot be denied. The words were spoken, the miracles done, in the hearing and sight of all. And many have believed. One only course remains to His enemies. They must unite in destroying Him. The solemn council of the Priests and Elders, the High Priest at its head, has passed the sentence.

Through the winter, therefore, He has sought refuge in a city called Ephraim, near the wilderness, leaving the world and communing with God; far enough from Jerusalem to secure His safety; not so far but that any who will, may come to Him.

But the winter is passing away. Of the twelve hours of His day few yet remain. And there is work to be done. He is purposing to make one great and final display of His power in the cities of Galilee, first by His servants, then by His own presence, ere He die at Jerusalem.

Let it be understood that this arrangement of the Gospel Story is not approved by all writers. But, on the whole, it seems as reasonable as any. From the Lord's retirement to Ephraim after the raising of Lazarus to His last Passover, a period of four months has to be accounted for. And the account given by St. Luke, mainly, in the tenth and following chapters, supplies sayings and doings which would hardly fall in earlier. We are struck now not only by the things which Jesus said and did, but by the *manner* and *spirit* in which He said

and did them. He no longer hides Himself and His power from the public gaze. He is as one with a mighty purpose, shewing Himself openly, going through every city and village; His face stedfastly set to go to Jerusalem; with that about Him that men, seeing Him, thought that the Kingdom of God would immediately appear. St. Luke ix. 51; x. 1; xix. 11. Nowhere henceforth does He charge them to keep silence respecting His miracles. The end is approaching. The King is about to take to Himself His Kingdom. Therefore from the farthest limits of His realm He begins His triumphant progress, sending His messengers before Him to prepare His way whither He Himself would go.

237. *The Seventy sent forth.* St. Luke x. 1-16.

ONCE more the Lord is found in Galilee, preparing for His last journey to the Holy City, that there, by laying down His life on the Cross, He may finish the work which His Father has given Him to do. He has long since had the Twelve around Him, chosen followers, disciples, and at last Apostles, that is, *sent*.

St. Luke's account has supplied but little to the narrative for some months. He passes over the whole teaching at Jerusalem, with the two Feasts of Tabernacles and Dedication. That has been supplied entirely by St. John, who, having friends at Jerusalem in the High Priest's household, would be likely to know the proceedings of His Master's enemies, as well as to observe the words and works by which the Master proved His title to be the Son of God. Of this last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, and of the sending forth of the Seventy, St. Luke speaks at great length. And what more

natural? He was not of the number of the Twelve, and therefore had to gather his information concerning the earlier portions of the Lord's ministry from others. And though his informants were eye-witnesses from the beginning and ministers of the Word, St. Luke i. 2, yet it is not surprising that the Evangelist should write more fully of those later events in which he himself had taken part. For early tradition asserts that St. Luke was one of these Seventy. Through ten chapters we have references to this last journey, to actions in which the writer may have had a share, to words which he probably heard spoken.

After these things the Lord—a title given to Jesus frequently in this Gospel, seldom in the others—appointed other Seventy also, besides the Twelve. The Twelve in their higher order of ministry will represent the Bishops, who succeeded the Apostles in their office of ruling in the Church; while the Seventy will represent the second order, the Presbyters or Priests.

These Seventy He sent out; two and two, as He had sent the Twelve, that they might mutually exhort and comfort one another; before His face, into every city and place whither He Himself would come. He no longer desires to conceal Himself, or to withdraw. They are to be as so many John Baptists, heralds and forerunners. He will follow them, and make Himself known.

In many points He gives them the same instructions as to the Twelve. With these differences, however—that they go to announce His coming, and that they need not confine their preaching to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. But here, as there, He bids them pray to the Lord of the Harvest, to send forth labourers; answering the prayer

forthwith. He sends them forth; on a dangerous service, as lambs among wolves. They are to go poorly provided; like their Master, dependent upon charity; not wasting their time in compliments and greetings; blessing the house they enter; accepting their necessary food as wages fairly earned; healing the sick; still preaching the old message of the nearness of the Kingdom of God; solemnly protesting by word and action against such as should not receive them. Such rejecters of Christ's servants and of their message should find even a sharper judgment in that Day than Sodom and Gomorrah. Better for them not to have heard the Saviour's words and seen His works, than having heard and seen, to reject Him. Woe to Chorazin, to Bethsaida, to Capernaum! They have despised the disciples. In despising the disciples they have despised Jesus, and so have despised God.

238. *The Seventy return.* St. Luke x. 17-24.

IT was written of the Twelve that they went out preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere. St. Luke ix. 6. The same power and blessing, we are sure, attended the Seventy. But nothing is shewn us of their active ministry. Their message delivered, their miracles performed, they return, some sooner, some later, from the cities to which they were sent. All are of the same mind, full of joy, as they report to their Lord that even the evil spirits are subject to them in His Name. This power is not mentioned in their commission. We may think of them, therefore, as full of glad surprise—for once, at least, the evil spirit had proved too strong for the Apostles, St. Luke ix. 40;—and they would now be looking forward con-

fidently to the day when their Lord should take His great power and reign.

What they report His all-seeing eye had seen them do. He was beholding the whole conflict; the war in Heaven in the far-distant past; Satan with his angels cast down, falling like lightning from Heaven to Hell; setting up his kingdom upon earth to be worshipped by men, St. Luke iii. 6; now thrust off his throne and compelled to loose his hold at the bidding of these young disciples in the Name of Jesus; to stand up once more, exalting himself in the place of God, deceiving the whole world; to be finally cast out and cast down for ever. 2 Thess. ii. 4; Rev. xiii. 6-8; xx. 1-10. All this lay before the Lord's eye—the strife, the advance, the victory, fought and won by Himself first, fought and won henceforward in the power of His Name, by the feeblest of the children of men.

And that they may go on conquering, He gives them further powers. They shall tread on serpents and scorpions, and on those things of which scorpions and serpents are a type, all the might of that old serpent the Devil. Rev. ix. 3-10. Nothing shall hurt them. Yet, with all this power made theirs, they were not therefore to glory. A higher joy was theirs. Their names were written in Heaven.

In that hour Jesus, teaching them of the true grounds of joy, Himself rejoiced in spirit, as seeing of the travail of His soul. Troubled in spirit, He was often the Man of Sorrows. Of His rejoicing we read but this once. That which the wise and prudent of the world would not see, and which the Father had hidden from their pride, was revealed unto these babes. This thanksgiving was spoken, we imagine, with eyes uplifted to His Father in Heaven. Then, turning to the disciples, He tells

them again of the Oneness of the Son with the Father, of the power delivered unto the Son, in His human nature, as the Son of Man.

The one great joy and blessing of the disciples is, that their names are written in Heaven. Yet in the sight and knowledge vouchsafed to them they are also blessed. Prophets and righteous men had desired to see Messiah; prophets and kings had desired to see the Kingdom of God. By faith, indeed, they saw the Day of Christ, by faith they heard the Word of life, in types and ceremonies, in the law and the prophets. But by faith only, and so, imperfectly. And so they died, not having received the promises, but having seen them *afar off*. Heb. xi. 13. Now the Jewish rulers beheld them face to face, yet saw them not; for their eyes were blinded. Their *sight* was dim compared with the *faith* of the fathers. The disciples saw and believed. Blessed were their eyes, indeed, enlightened by faith!

For ourselves—is this blessedness ours? For we may see, as the Jews saw, without believing; and so our names not be written in the Book of Life.

239. *The Book of Life.* St. Luke x. 20.

CAREFUL and troubled about many things, well describes the feverish state of the world and the world's children. To be restless, eager, reaching forward after some higher good just out of their reach, to obtain it only to be equally restless, eager, grasping after something more, is the lot of millions. The world boasts of its progress. And for much of that progress the Church of God may be thankful to Him who has so blessed human study as to make it minister to man's bodily and spiritual welfare. But the world, boasting yet dissatisfied, pushes on.

A good example, in some respects, to the servant of Christ! We may not think ourselves ever to have apprehended, to have gained *all*. We must press forward toward the mark. We must make progress. We must grow in spiritual life and spiritual power for ourselves and for our brethren. If Christians were careful and troubled about many things in this sense, as Martha was, so as to give greater glory to Christ, they would scarcely be to blame. Unhappily their carefulness and anxiety shews itself in other ways. Most of all, in religious pride and ill-timed ambition.

We would be as these disciples were. What joy, what glory, for us to know Christ as they knew Him; to go forth to His work, to teach in His Name, in His Name to cast out devils and to do wonderful works! That we think would quite satisfy us. That far surpasses any joy or glory of human science or power; that confers far greater benefit upon our suffering fellow-creatures; that wins souls to eternal life.

Yet, having this, we might still fail of the one thing needful. The highest Christian rejoicing is not reserved to the caster-out of devils, to the mightiest of the Seventy, to the chiefest of the Apostles, simply because they worked miracles. Their great joy is shared by the youngest, the humblest, and the least. Rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven. Blessed are the poor, the persecuted for righteousness' sake, the little children! for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Their names are written there as heirs and possessors. Not spiritual gifts but spiritual graces are the title to that joy. To the casters-out of devils He may say, 'I never knew you.' The preacher of the Word may become a castaway. 1 Cor. ix. 27.

But to them who are written in Heaven, in the Lamb's Book of Life, there is joy unspeakable and full of glory. Heb. xii. 23; Rev. xxi. 27.

Yet, though we could see our names written there, we must rejoice with trembling. The Scripture speaks as if names written there might yet be blotted out; must be blotted out indeed, if the garment be defiled, if the good fight be not fought and won. Rev. iii. 5; xxii. 19.

Envy not, therefore, the disciples in that the devils were subject unto them. Thou, too, O Christian, art a child of God. Thy Father knows thee by name. He hath given thee Eternal Life in His Son. Hath He not written thy name in Heaven? Rejoice, therefore. Yet take heed withal that thou make thy calling and election sure. To cast the devil out of thine own soul is the very best of miracles. So hast thou Christ's assurance that the Power of His Name is upon thee, and that thou shalt, in the end, have thy part with Moses and Clement, and all whose names are written in the Book of Life. Exod. xxxii. 33; Phil. iv. 3.

240. *The Lawyer's Question.* St. Luke x. 25-29.

IT is difficult to connect this conversation with words spoken privately by Jesus to His disciples. Yet the Lawyer may have been eager to hear, and near enough to catch the blessing pronounced on those who saw His works and heard His words. That blessing declared plainly that the disciples were enjoying what Kings and Prophets saw only afar off; that the old Covenant was no more than a shadow; that the Gospel was the reality.

To what purpose then was the Law? That was the question which at once presented itself. If

those Fathers of the Jewish Church and nation were not so blessed as these men of Galilee, how was eternal life to be attained? Was all their faith and obedience as nothing in God's sight? This question he puts, tempting Jesus: 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He tries to shew that Jesus contradicts Moses.

That weapon which foiled the great Tempter will foil all who ply the same trade. To the Law and to the Testimony! What is written there? What readest thou there from day to day, as thou expoundest its precepts? That was His answer to the Jew. Does He not say the same to us Christians? Whether we ask in humble anxiety to learn, or in pretended doubt, His answer is the same: 'What is written? How readest thou?'

The verse, Deut. vi. 4, was daily read in the synagogue and recited by all pious Jews. It has been supposed, also, that it was written on the parchment worn by the Lawyer as a phylactery, or frontlet, between his eyes, Deut. vi. 4-9; St. Matt. xxiii. 5; and that Jesus pointed to it, as He asked the question. The Lawyer's reply is met by the simple counsel, 'This do, and thou shalt live.' Love is the fulfilling of the Law. And this would be meant, of course, to touch the conscience of the tempter, and of all who heard, with the doubt—Have I done this? If not, how then shall I live? My hope in the Law fails me, for I have not kept it.

But the Lawyer would not confess himself as wanting. He tries to justify himself. The Scribes and Lawyers were very subtle in their explanations. There was hardly a commandment which they had not wrested from its simple meaning. St. Matt. xxiii. 13-22. He pretends to doubt *how far* he is bound to shew love; as if it were a matter of near-

ness and distance measured by miles ; as if he was bound, perhaps, to help a relation, or a man of the next village, but excused in the case of a stranger, or one who dwelt afar off. He wanted to plead that, if he had failed in shewing love to a stranger, he had at any rate done his duty to his *neighbour*.

Desiring to justify himself ! That was the fault of all the Jewish teachers. St. Luke xvi. 15. And is that fault unknown now ? Do we never try to prove ourselves in the right when we are utterly wrong ? How hard it is to get even a child to confess itself to blame : ' I didn't know ; I couldn't help it—it was somebody else's fault ! ' So Adam began : ' The woman that Thou gavest me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat.' So transgressors justify themselves day by day. Great grace is his who knows the will of God and does it ! Hardly less grace is his, who, having transgressed, says simply, ' I have sinned,' and takes the blame and the punishment as rightly deserved.

241. *The Good Samaritan.* St. Luke x. 30-37.

THIS parable answers the question, ' Who is my neighbour ? ' and that other question also—' Who then shall be saved ? ' which arises from the command, ' Do this, and thou shalt live.' A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, a notoriously dangerous road, beset with robbers, who after stripping and wounding him, departed, leaving him half dead. This was no uncommon occurrence, and might well have been within the experience of His hearers. So too might have been the other circumstances of the parable—Priest and Levite, afraid lest the wounded man's fate might be their own, prudently passing him by, forgetful of any lessons of

charity which they might have learned in the reading of the Law and the Temple services; the Samaritan, a stranger in blood and in religion, touched with compassion and careless of his own safety, stopping to bind up the gaping wounds, and carrying the sufferer to a place of safety and refreshment. The parable explains itself. The neighbour was the Samaritan, a neighbour in spite of the Jew's illwill, ready to pay, and therefore worthy to receive, every kind office. Every man is thy neighbour. Go and do thou likewise. So far an answer to the question—'Who is my neighbour?'

But further. Ancient writers hold that more than a lesson of charity is taught here. So our Church. Else why should she have put this parable as the Gospel on the 13th Sunday after Trinity, to be read with an Epistle from Gal. iii. 16-23. In the latter we read that the Law could not give life; that the Scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. Now, here is mankind, going down from Jerusalem, the city of peace, to Jericho, the cursed city, Josh. vi. 26, falling among thieves, the evil spirits who stripped him of his garment of innocence, and wounded him nigh unto death. Long he lay helpless, shut up under sin. Priest and Levite, that is, the Law of Moses and the Priesthood of Levi's tribe, came near and looked at him. But they could not give him life. They passed by, leaving him in his nakedness and faintness. Then came the Samaritan, Christ Himself—of whom the Jews said, 'Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil,' St. John viii. 48—beholding and pitying. He passed not by, but came to him; binding up his wounds with wholesome discipline; pouring in oil and wine, to soothe and clean and stimulate; bearing him in

His own perfect human nature ; bringing him to the inn, His Church, the open home for all guests ; there taking care of him in all Divine compassion and love. That night during the first hours of danger the good Samaritan stayed by his wounded friend ; even so Christ dwelt among us. Then departing, He gave two pence to the host—in which some have seen a figure of the two great Sacraments,—charging him to tend the wounded man, and promising to repay all further cost. So Christ charges and promises His ministers. Is this too fanciful ? Does not the interpretation correspond with the parable exactly ? Does it not give the answer to the first as well as to the last question of the Lawyer ? Thou hast not won salvation by the Law. Then seek it by faith in Christ Jesus. I am come to do what the Law cannot do ; bringing salvation to Mine enemies.

Go and do thou likewise.

242. *The Disciples taught to Pray.* St. Luke
xi. 1-13.

WRITING especially for Gentile readers, St. Luke enforces the necessity of prayer by the Lord's example no less than by His words. The Son of God, though not needing to *ask* from His Father, nevertheless prays, feeding His human soul with communion with God, and asking for His Church that which can only be received through Him, the one Mediator between God and man.

The disciples, remembering how John the Baptist had taught his disciples, ask their Master to teach them to pray. He had already given to the Twelve a form of prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. That form He repeats for the Seventy, with one or

two expressions changed, but without difference of meaning; and the doxology is omitted.

The Lord's prayer stands in St. Matthew's Gospel in connection with forgiveness. In St. Luke's it is followed by the exhortation to earnestness and importunity in prayer, to the frequent use of this prayer, one might say. As in our need we go to a friend, selfishly, no matter what the hour, even at midnight, without scruple about disturbing him, taking no excuses, until we force him to give us what we want, were it only to get rid of us, in that same spirit of importunity should we go to God, determined to have, not letting Him rest till He bless us. Gen. xxxii. 26. For if by mere dint of asking again and again, we win what we want from an unwilling friend and at great inconvenience to him, how much more shall we obtain our requests from our Father, when we ask in the words and by the authority of His dear Son! Our Father in Heaven is not shut in by locked and barred doors. He neither slumbereth nor sleepeth. He never says, 'Too late for Me to attend to you.' It is no trouble to Him to rise and give. He never bids us to trouble Him not. Rather He waiteth to be gracious, full of invitations that we may ask, full of promises for all that do ask. The gift is ready; it is only to be asked for, and it is given. While men are speaking in prayer, the Angel of blessing is sent from Heaven to earth. Dan. ix. 20, 21. With good gifts, too. Not as Satan gives, the gift seeming bread, yet really stone; seeming fish, yet really a serpent; seeming an egg, yet really a scorpion; sweetness in the mouth, and poison in the heart. But *good* gifts, as an earthly father will give, and better, more abundant and more enduring. An earthly father, out of his poor scanty store, harsh

and unkind and grudging as he may be sometimes, will in his love to his children give them of his best. Much more will the Heavenly Father give. Already He has given His Son, His well beloved. Soon He will give His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of fellowship and union, the Spirit of adoption whereby men are made His children indeed, planted into Christ, and so made inheritors of His Kingdom. Thus, while He pledges Himself to give, He puts us into the position to claim, almost as of right. He has sworn to give. He has given His Spirit as the earnest of our inheritance. What then shall we fear to ask? Why should we be faint in asking?

243. *The Woman bent Double.* St. Luke xiii. 10-17.

THE Sabbath day; and Jesus is teaching in the Synagogue. Among the worshippers is a poor suffering woman. For eighteen years she had been bound by a spirit of weakness, bowed together; bent to the ground, so that she could scarce look up into a friend's face. Again, we see Satan the tormentor, grievously afflicting the body, as he once afflicted Job. Yet here, apparently, as with Job, not permitted to hurt the soul.

Such an affliction of the body, cutting the sufferer off from so many occupations and so many pleasures, would naturally affect the spirits. For eighteen years bent double, able to walk only with effort and constant pain, an object of remark and often of ridicule, this woman might well shrink from places of public resort. We know how sickness is pleaded as an excuse for self-indulgence, and idleness, and staying away from Church; how people give way to nervousness and low spirits and a little pain, until their fancied illness grows upon them, or their little

weakness appears very serious, and they cannot make the effort necessary to get to Church, or even to kneel at their prayers at home. It seems hard and cruel for anyone in good health to blame such persons, and to say that they are making their illness an excuse for neglecting family duties and the worship of God. Yet a word of plain speaking might very often do good. See this poor sufferer. In spite of her real, and painful, and long-continued infirmity, she could make her way to the Lord's House. There she found comfort and light to her soul. There too she found healing for her body.

Jesus saw her. Such a poor bent figure would strike anybody's eye. And He had pity on her, and called her to Him, and said to her, 'Thou hast been loosed from thy infirmity.' The sign of healing accompanies the word. He lays His hands on her, and immediately she is made straight.

Made straight! What a change! Now she can look into the face of Him who has healed her; and higher yet, up towards the bright heaven which for so long she has seen, if at all, only with a sort of painful side-glance. Once more with uplifted eyes she glorifies God.

The great Physician has taught us that bodily diseases are types of the soul's sickness. May we not see here, in the bowed-down body, a figure of the soul bowed-down by earthly cares and desires, its eyes ever bent upon mean gains and foul pleasures? If we pity the face so bent towards the earth, shall we not pity the soul? Man was created to look up, in spirit as well as in face. Col. iii. 1, 2. Some there are, with hearts bent only on earthly things for far more than eighteen years; bound by Satan, in nowise able to lift up themselves. To such, O Lord Jesu, come speedily. Call them;

speak the word ; lay Thine hand on them, that they may look up.

Great is the anger of the Ruler of the Synagogue. He pretends zeal for the Sabbath. But in reality he is offended because Jesus is honoured. It is the old hypocrisy ; and Jesus condemns it with the old reasoning. The Jews never scrupled to loose the ox or the ass on the Sabbath day for water. Yet, when a sister, a daughter of Abraham, an heir of the promises, one who has a right to be free, St. John viii. 33, is loosed from Satan's bondage, after eighteen years' grievous suffering, they call that Sabbath-breaking ! 'Thou hypocrite !' A crushing rebuke, understood and approved by all !

244. *Are there few saved ?* St. Luke xiii. 22-30.

THE journey through Galilee and Samaria is continued. City and village is visited, and in each Jesus declares His message. At one time, probably, He would speak rather in invitation, of a Kingdom open to all, even the Gentiles ; at another, rather in warning, as if many, seeking to gain the world, would lose their own soul. At last one asks the question which, sooner or later, was sure to come—whether there will be few or many saved at the last.

We have all thought upon this. God is so merciful, Christ has died ; therefore He cannot give many souls over to eternal death ! God is so holy, Christ requires such perfect faith ; who, then, shall be saved ?

We are not wise in intruding into such matters, which are too high for us. The secret things belong to the Lord our God. The Lord knoweth them that are His. What concerns us is our duty. Let every

one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from iniquity. 2 Tim. ii. 19. The gate of Life is narrow. And when the gate has been found, and we have obtained an entrance, the road is narrow too. We must *strive* if we are to enter, *strive* if we are to keep the road. 2 Esdras vii. 3-14; Col. i. 29. And to enter in at a narrow gate requires the unloading ourselves of all worldly and fleshly burdens, of all covetousness and pride. There is another gate, the broad one; easily found, ever open, entered without difficulty; beyond it the broad and easy road leading unto death. Many there be that go in thereat. Few there be that find the strait gate.

Moreover, though the strait gate be opened at once to him that findeth it and knocketh, yet only a certain time is granted. The hour will come when many will seek to enter in. Then the day of grace will have passed. If ye have not entered in then, ye will knock in vain. Once the Master of the House has risen up and shut to the door, all appeals, all striving *then*, will be fruitless. You may knock loudly and constantly, you may plead the closest intimacy with Him, that you have been His disciples, His ministers of mercy and power. But all in vain. 'I never knew you!' will be His reply of final and irreversible rejection; 'Depart from Me!' His sentence; 'Workers of iniquity!' His only name for you.

Then few will be saved! Is that His meaning?

He continues: 'They shall come, *many* shall come,' St. Matt. viii. 11, 'of all nations, to sit down with the Fathers and Prophets of Israel in the Kingdom of God. The first shall be last, and the last first. That which the Jew has despised and forfeited shall be given to the Gentile. Many mansions are prepared for many guests.'

After all, then, what is the answer? Are there few that be saved, or many? We dare not say. Foolish virgins and wise; tares and wheat; bad fishes and good;—these are the parables of the lost and the saved. If our fears see many lost, the Scripture tells of a great and countless multitude saved. But we may not delay in questionings. This is answer enough for us: ‘Strive to enter in at the strait gate; Follow thou Me.’

245. *The Pharisees and Herod's Threat.* St. Luke
xiii. 31-35.

IN Galilee no less than in Judæa the Pharisees were now determined to put Jesus to a violent and shameful death. Herod would readily join them. His former curiosity, St. Luke ix. 9, would by this time be mixed with fear, as he heard the name of Jesus connected with the coming of a kingdom; and the man who put John the Baptist to death would no more respect the King of the Jews than his father had done. St. Matt. ii. 16. But the people of Galilee were not of the same mind with their rulers. The Pharisees, therefore, fearing to use violence here, come to Jesus with this threat from Herod, with the view either of stopping His preaching, or of driving Him into Judæa, where they might be better able to carry out their designs. Here, as always, Jesus perceives their subtlety, and sends them back to their master: ‘Go ye and tell that fox that I know his character and his cunning. Tell him that My movements are not to be altered or hurried by any threat of his. Tell him that, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, I do miracles as never man did; that in the fulness of My time I shall be perfected. Day by day I

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must walk on My appointed journey, going forward till I reach that city where alone the hatred of men can touch Me. I am a prophet. And in Jerusalem only can the prophet perish.'

His answer was intended as much for the Pharisees themselves as for Herod who had sent them. It challenged them to look at His mighty works. It spoke of a little while, and then He should be perfected, consecrated by death to an everlasting Priesthood. Heb. vii. 21. For this word 'perfected,' while it signifies being brought to death, means also brought to perfection of any kind, and in the Old Testament is used of the consecration of the High Priest. Levit. xxi. 10. It forewarned them that their bitterness was but working out the purposes of God, and that while they thought to destroy they were but accomplishing; bringing to an end, indeed, but to finished work, to glory, to triumph. That end was to be in Jerusalem. In Galilee they could do nothing.

A little while ago it was, Woe unto Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum! Now it is, Woe unto Jerusalem! That city, beloved of God, the home of Kings and prophets and righteous men, is now the den of murderers. Isa. i. 21. The Divine judgment has gone forth against her, so that she shall become as Babylon, and Sodom, and Egypt. Rev. xi. 8; xvii. 5, 6. She has set herself to reject Messiah, and therefore she shall not be spared the blood of a single Saint.

Even as the Lord utters these fearful words of judgment, His heart melts within Him in pity for the city which He so dearly loves. Twice He calls her by her name, 'Jerusalem,' as in the intensity of His tenderness, He mourns over her cruelty, her hardness, and her desolation. The same words are

placed by St. Matthew at a later period of the history. St. Matt. xxiii. 37-39. They were certainly spoken by the Lord as He left the Temple for the last time. But what more likely than that, already oppressed with sorrow for the woe coming upon the city, He should even in Galilee speak these words, so soon to be more solemnly and awfully repeated, in the hour when He should go forth from those who had rejected His mercy and were plotting His death !

246. *The Dropsy healed.* St. Luke xiv. 1-6.

IRRITATED as the Pharisees were with Jesus, some of them appear wavering still, anxious to see more of His works, and to hear more of His words. He is again asked, by one of the chief Pharisees, to eat bread on the Sabbath day. With all their strictness the Jews never imagined that friendly gatherings and courteous hospitality were forbidden on the Sabbath ; and the Lord, by accepting such invitations, justifies them to His followers. Works of servile labour we Christians may not do, the works of our worldly calling, which, bringing in profit, tempt us to neglect the direct duties of the Lord's day, Church-going and the Blessed Sacrament. But all that tends to the rest and refreshment of body and mind and soul, all that tends to maintain family love and social friendship, can be done to the Lord, and seems authorised by His words and example. For the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. To lay down precise rules is impossible. Some will make Sunday a day of worldly pleasure, so as to forget that it is the Lord's day. This is plainly wrong. But it appears equally wrong, contrary to the spirit and letter of Scripture

as well as Christ's example, to make the Lord's day a day of gloom, and idleness, and toil for the mind.

Whether the giver of the feast was concerned or not in any treacherous plot, this is told us distinctly—that they watched Jesus. His enemies fully understood that He was manifesting forth His glory more than He had done hitherto; and they anticipated, not without reason, that on this Sabbath day He would find some poor sufferer seeking the healing touch.

It was as they expected. Among the intruders into the great man's hall stood one which had the dropsy; timidly hoping, yet not daring to ask, that for him some crumb of mercy might be found. Oh, how many there are like this man, oppressed in soul with a mortal disease, pride for instance, or covetousness—which ancient writers so often compare with dropsy—who would like to be healed, and yet, from fear of men, dare not come boldly forward and ask in faith to be made whole!

Still for these half-seekers Jesus has the mercy they cannot make up their minds to ask. He takes their part against the world they are afraid of, against their own weak wavering selves. And His enemies, watching Him, are caught in their own snare. He asks of them whether it be lawful to heal on the Sabbath day. Wisely they hold their peace. For what can they answer? The miracle is performed in spite of their silence. And to His further appeal to their own conduct in matters which concern their own profit and loss, they have equally nothing to answer. They cannot deny that if labour be permitted for the rescue of a drowning beast, mercy to a suffering brother must be, at least, blameless. They have been slow to learn the lesson. Do they know it now?

247. *The Chief Seats.* St. Luke xiv. 7-11.

BY this time the guests are thronging in; and Jesus, observing their eagerness and jealousy in choosing each for himself the most honourable seat, speaks a parable in which the rebuke is scarcely veiled; a caution which, though originally spoken by the wisest of men, Prov. xxv. 6, 7, was forgotten, or at least neglected, by these honour-seeking Jews.

In all public assemblies, whether for worship, for discussion, or for eating, much formal ceremony was used by Jews of all classes, from the highest to the lowest. It was a universal fault in their character that every one wanted to put himself before his brother. They loved the chief seats in the Synagogues, as well as the uppermost places at feasts; St. Matt. xxiii. 6; and this eagerness for human respect was not thoroughly rooted out sixty years later among the Jewish Christians. St. James ii. 1-6. The rich and proud claimed honour to themselves, and there were many too ready to bow down before wealth and arrogance, and to despise the poor. Dare we say the fault is cured now? Dare we say that there is no pride on the one side, no fawning on the other? In this respect, even in our very Churches, we are not blameless. The Lord would have too much ground for repeating His rebuke; St. James would again be shocked at seeing the rich preferred to the poor in the House of Him who is Father of all.

In these great banquets the guests were accustomed to seat themselves before the entrance of the Master of the Feast. Every man considered himself entitled to a place according to his rank. One would pride himself on his family, another on his

wealth, another on his learning, another on his holiness, another on his gray hairs. Among these, who could judge? Hence would arise bickerings and ill-will. Few would be so poor in spirit, and so meek, as to sit down by choice in the lowest place, among the poorest relations of their host and men of mean and despised condition. For then, as now, a man was esteemed very much according to his own opinion of himself, and the company he kept. Yet this, the Lord says, is the surest way to avoid humiliation and to win the highest honour. For the Master had an acknowledged right to correct mistakes, and to seat his guests according to his own judgment. Grievously mortified would that man be who, being desired to leave his seat for a more worthy guest, could find none vacant until he came to the very lowest. And great would be the respect shewn to one whom the host summoned from his modest seat, to go up higher.

So it shall be in Heavenly things. The King of Heaven, the Master of the House at the Marriage-supper of the Lamb, shall exalt the humble and meek to the first places in His Banqueting-house. But he that exalteth himself shall be abased, thrust down, and cast out.

And what Jesus taught by precept He fulfilled in practice. Who ever stooped like Him to the lowest place? Who, like Him, has been taken up into the highest glory?

248. *Who shall be bidden?* St. Luke xiv. 12-14.

BUT the pride was not confined to the guests in their jealous eagerness for the chief seats. It shewed itself also in the givers of the feasts. These great banquets were intended then, as they often

are now, for show and fashion, not for friendship's sake, or brotherly kindness and charity. The entertainer expected his repayment in a like invitation, or service of some kind, or flattery. In time the invitation came; and the price was paid.

Jesus rebukes this pride and self-seeking. He shews how the rich may make to themselves friends with their unrighteous mammon—that is, their worldly wealth. Call the poor and the suffering to thy table, and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee. A strange reason this seems, at first! But weigh it. Earthly payment for earthly gift is no real blessing. Recompense at the resurrection of the just is blessing indeed. And that shall be thine.

The customs of society are altered, and nowadays the poor might shew themselves as unwilling to sit at the rich man's table as the rich man to invite them thither. But the laws of charity and humility alter not. What if the money squandered on the magnificence of costly banquets, on delicate meats and rare wines, were sanctified to provide food and clothing, shelter and fuel, for the poor, teaching for the ignorant, and medicine for the sick? If the rich cannot bid the poor to their table—and indeed this is not always possible—let them send their table to the poor. If the rich man cannot distribute his own alms, let him, as must be done sometimes, trust the Church with them. She will gladly be her Lord's servant in the ministering to the saints. Rom. xv. 26. True, they cannot recompense the giver. And better for him that they cannot! His repayment awaits him at the resurrection of the just, repayment from the Lord. Prov. xix. 17; St. Matt. xxv. 31-46.

In this matter again, precept is enforced by

example. The Master of the Heavenly Feast calls all, indeed, but those more especially whom the world has neglected. The Divine Wisdom calls the simple and ignorant to eat of the Heavenly Food. He filleth the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.

What can we give Him in exchange for all His benefits? Nothing but the eager, thankful acceptance of His offer, the crowding to His Table here, the longing for the good things to come. And, going to that Feast, let us seek rather the very lowest place, as all too good for us. Whatever honour He may assign to us will be far above our deserts. Yet He has said—O wonderful words!—that to him that overcometh He will grant to sit upon His Throne, even as He, having overcome, is set down upon His Father's Throne.

249. *The Great Supper.* St. Luke xiv. 15-24.

THOSE words—‘recompensed at the resurrection of the just’—fell as seed upon good ground. One of the guests, looking forward to the manifestation of the Kingdom of God, to the rest after toil, the triumph after battle, the banquet after much hunger and thirst, breaks forth in a confession of his faith and hope. Blessed is he that shall eat bread, that shall sit down to the Royal Banquet, in the Kingdom of God!

It is not the first time that the speech of a bystander has opened the door for higher teaching. St. Luke xi. 27. The Lord God is the certain man who by His prophets had long ago invited many guests, the whole Jewish people, but especially the rulers and teachers, to the Feast of good things. Isa. xxv. 6. The Eastern custom was, besides the

earlier invitation, to send a message of reminder to the guests when the feast was ready. At supper-time, therefore, in the fulness of time, the Son of God and His disciples have come to the Jewish rulers and wise men, reminding the invited guests that all things are now ready. We know how they made excuse, all, with one consent. One for the lust of the flesh, another for the lust of the eyes, another for the pride of life, begs off from his engagement. These things might have been done with before, or at least put aside for a time. 1 Cor. vii. 29-31.

The Master of the House is angry, justly angry. He has been scorned and insulted. But His hospitality must not be wasted. There is the supper. Guests must be found. His servants are now ordered to go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city—still among the chosen people, the Jerusalem of this earth—to bring in the poor and suffering and despised, the publicans and sinners. And they come in.

The first part of the parable declares what God had done for His own people. Now we read, as in a prophecy, of what He was going to do. Too vast is the Kingdom of Heaven to be filled with these few. There is yet room. Therefore must the servants go out again, outside the city this time, into the highways and hedges of the world, among the rudest outcasts, and compel them to come in. His house must be filled. Compel them to come in! Not by force and persecution. But by persuasion overcoming their unwillingness and their sense of unworthiness. For such as these, Gentiles, heathen, would hardly believe the Gospel invitation to be intended for them. But the command is,—‘Go teach *all* nations, preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them.’ The House must be *filled*.

For the first bidden are now shut out. They have forfeited their place at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Prov. i. 28. If they are ever to come in, it is as among the last; not as Jews under the first Covenant, but as Christians under the second.

And this, true no doubt many times in the eastern feasts, true in the refusal of the guests first bidden and in their rejection from the table, is true for all souls at all times. Thou hast been called. Art thou waiting for the final summons? Or dost thou make excuse? The door will be shut, and quickly, for the House will soon be filled. What if the door be shut against thee, the House filled, and thy seat taken by another?

250. *Neglect of Holy Communion.* St. Luke xiv.
15-24.

TO every soul at all times this parable, like the parable so much like it in St. Matt. xxii. 1-14, speaks in words of encouragement and of warning. Of encouragement, because it tells of the Lord's infinite love, and that we, whatever we may be, are bidden to His Heavenly Feast. Sooner or later the invitation comes to us, even if we are among the very vilest of outcasts, not yet brought within His city the Church, not yet reached until His servants go out a third time. They must compel us, by all sweet compulsion of Divine Love, to go in. Yet there is room. The Mercy and Love of God are far beyond the needs and the willingness of man. And His House, with its many mansions, must be filled.

To us Christians the parable speaks very distinctly in another sense. What is that Marriage-Feast to us in this present life but the Holy Com-

munion, the Sacred Feast which Jesus makes, the rich Banquet of His Flesh and Blood? Every confirmed Christian is bidden to that Feast. The Church sounds the notice of her monthly, her weekly, in some favoured places her *daily*, Communion. And all things are now ready. The bell has sounded for the Service, the Altar is duly spread, the Priest stands at his post, the Bread and Wine are made ready, are offered, are sanctified. By the power of the Holy Ghost these common things have become Divine, the food of the body has been made Food for the soul. The Priest, Steward of the Mysteries of God, turns to feed the guests. But how many are set down to this Holy Table? Rather, instead of asking,—how many? we cry in wonder,—how few! They had accepted the invitation; for they have renewed their Baptismal vow; they have been confirmed. They have again, and openly, pledged themselves to keep the commandments of their Lord. Then, at notice of the Holy Feast, they began to fall away, with one consent making excuses. Some coming even into the guest-chamber, seeing the Table prepared, sharing in its preparation, and in the oblation of Bread and Wine. Then—going out! Why, this looks worse than making the excuse of pressing business. Plainly these have leisure to come. Yet in the midst of the Feast they arise and walk away, turning their backs when all things are now ready, refusing to be compelled even by that wondrous Love which gives itself.

What does our Prayer-book say of such?

Read the second Exhortation giving warning for the celebration of the Holy Communion, which the Priest is instructed to use in case he shall see the people negligent to come. In that the Church

solemnly warns her children of their duty in this matter, of their disobedience, of what is worse still—their ingratitude, and then of their danger, in case they refuse to come thereto. Indeed, what excuses can avail us? All resolve themselves into these—contempt for Christ and wilful persistence in sin. If the giver of an earthly feast takes it so sorely that men, having accepted his invitation, turn their backs upon that which he has provided for them at great trouble and expense, shall God, our jealous God, allow Himself to be despised? Will the Lord Jesus welcome us in love after we have disobeyed His dying command, disbelieved His words, and gone away from Him? St. John vi. 53-66. How is it that we can treat Him thus? How shall they who make excuses here, dare ask a place at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb?

251. *Counting the Cost.* St. Luke xiv. 25-35.

THE feast is ended, the parables have been spoken, and the guests disperse. And many follow Jesus, convinced by the healing done upon the palsied man, won by the wisdom and beauty and courage of His words. They, too, perhaps, would be His disciples. But now that He has so drawn them to Him, He would have them pause and reflect awhile. He desires no rashness, no haste, no such zeal as quickly burns itself out. Therefore He takes up for this crowd of followers the warning of the last parable. Whosoever would come after Jesus must be ready to give up his field, his yoke of oxen, yes, and dearer things, too, parents, children, wife, even his own life. Otherwise he cannot be Jesus' disciple. This was in some sense the law of the Old Covenant. Deut. xiii. 6-11. Still more

must it be the law of the New. The Master has set the example of hating His own life; Apostles and Disciples followed in His steps, not counting their lives dear unto them. Acts xx. 24. So must we walk, loving Him, hating all in comparison with Him, bearing our Cross after Him. Let a man understand at once the reality, the hardness of Christ's service. 2 Tim. ii. 3. Better for him not to follow at all, than to follow for a little while, and then go away!

How is it in earthly things? As wise men act for this world, so let the Christian act for the Heavenly Kingdom. To begin and not to finish involves ruin and disgrace. Therefore men first count the cost. The tower which we have to build must be the adding of all graces and virtues to our character, 2 St. Peter i. 5-8, that we may be an holy Temple unto the Lord. To make war and to fail, is even greater ruin. Therefore the king calculates his own strength, and that of the enemy. Can we fight against the Son of God? Acts v. 39. Who may abide the Day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? Mal. iii. 2. As the weaker king gives up his thought of resistance and asks conditions of peace, so must we kiss the Son lest He be angry, so must we pay Him His price and buy Him off, even with repentance and tears, and vows of amendment, and the acceptance of His mercy on His own conditions. Joash, and Ahaz, and Hezekiah, had to purchase peace at the sacrifice of their most valued treasures. In modern warfare it is the same. The weaker must submit to the conditions of the stronger. And the stronger, being resisted and conquering, will make those conditions infinitely more painful. These are the Lord's conditions—hard enough, they seem!—

‘Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.’

Yet hard as they seem, they will prove light to all who accept them. He may not require us to forsake ; only to hold them at His will, to love them in Him with sanctified affection, to resign them cheerfully, should He so demand. But even then He repays, a thousand-fold in this world, and in the world to come, eternal life. St. Mark x. 28-30.

For the disciple of Christ is as the salt, a savour of preservation and life to the world as well as to himself. And should he fall away, he becomes as salt which has lost its savour, utterly worthless, fit only for the dunghill. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And let him understand.

252. *The Lost Sheep.* St. Luke xv. 1-7.

IF the words of Jesus offend and repel the Rulers, they attract the poor. The general effect of His ministry is to draw around Him the Publicans—that is, the Taxgatherers—and sinners, people of notoriously bad lives. Observing this, Pharisees and Scribes, unable to resist the wisdom and power of His words, renew their murmurs. This man, they say, who preaches a sterner holiness than Moses taught, and who ought therefore to be himself holy and separate from sinners, receives them, welcomes them, sits at table with them. The sharing a meal was generally looked upon as a proof of close friendship. Ps. xli. 9. It almost pledged a man to the opinions and the ways of his host and fellow-guests. 1 Cor. x. 20-21. Therefore the Lord speaks these parables.

Again He convinces them out of their own daily life. The sheep-owner will leave his ninety-nine

sheep, knowing that they are safe, to seek the single one that has gone astray. It may be a long search, and a dangerous one. Nevertheless he seeks, till he find it. Weary as he may be then, he has no harsh treatment, no rough word, for the poor foolish creature that has caused him so much labour. He takes it upon his shoulders, rejoicing, and carries it to the fold. And his neighbours must hear the good news, and rejoice with him. He has found his sheep, which was lost.

A parable! And a history! The Son of God left His ninety-nine sheep—the Angels, in the wide fields of Heaven—and came to seek and to save lost mankind. For all we have erred and gone astray from the fold like lost sheep. We have no sense to find our way back. We run into dangers of all kinds. The roaring lion is waiting to devour us. If we are to be saved at all, it is by the Shepherd's coming to 'seek us, to seek us thoroughly, effectually, till He find us. So He came, the Good Shepherd, from Heaven to Earth, following us all the weary and thorny way to the Cross and the grave. So He found us. He took us into His arms, footsore, frightened, wounded, hungry and thirsty as we were, lest in our ignorant terror we should flee even from Him. He does not punish. He does not drive. He carries; not giving us over to a servant, but bearing our sins in His own Body on the Tree. 1 St. Pet. ii. 24. He brings the wanderer to His home, the Fold of His Church, the one household in Heaven and Earth. Then He calls all who love Him to rejoice with Him over His sheep which He had lost, and has found.

And, lest we should doubt who these may be, He explains it solemnly: 'I say unto you, I Myself who know these things, that there is greater rejoicing

among the Angels over the return of one penitent sinner than over the steadfast obedience of many saints. Not that their steadfastness is the less prized, but that the recovery of the lost is as a new gain, something earned hardly, and against hope. So the Good Shepherd seeks and finds. So His Angels rejoice with Him over each returning sinner.

It was a stern lesson to the Jewish rulers, if they could understand. They were Shepherds of Israel, yet they had left these sheep to wander uncared for. Ezek. xxxiv. 6. And they are finding fault with Jesus for doing work which they have neglected. How unlike to Him! how unlike to His holy and loving Angels! O Good Shepherd, seek me, find me, save me, carry me Home. And make me to rejoice in the salvation of my brethren.

253. *The Lost Piece of Silver.* St. Luke xv. 8-10.

THE love and pity of God towards sinful man under another image! In the Holy Land every woman, except the very poorest, wears round her head or neck a fringe or necklace of coins, her own peculiar wealth, which the husband never claims. She would be but a poor woman who had only ten pieces to show. And if she lost but one of these ten, how she would miss it both as ornament and as money! how quick she would be to acquaint her friends with her loss as she met them at the well! how early she would light her lamp, even at mid-day, and search through her dark, dust-laden house; removing every article of furniture; sweeping diligently, looking into every corner and crevice till she found it! That one piece of silver, of so little importance to a wealthy man, which he would not

deign to stoop for, is to her worth many an hour's weary work. Find it she must, and find it she does at last. Then in proportion to her trouble so is her joy. She does not wait now to meet her neighbours at the well-side to tell them of her good fortune. She is not content to run from house to house with the glad news. She must call them together that they may all rejoice with her, that she may tell the whole tale again, what pains she took, where she found the missing coin at last. She must shew it to them once more restored to its place, once more worn again as her own highly prized possession, received from her mother, to be handed on to her daughter.

Such is the Lord's love for every single soul. As if He wore each one as a bright jewel in His crown. Mal. iii. 17. As if He were as quick to detect the loss of one, and to vex Himself as the woman would over the loss of one piece out of ten. Moreover, we have a type of the soul in the piece of money, struck out of pure metal, stamped with the image and superscription of the King, St. Mark xii. 16; liable to be tarnished, the image and superscription to be crusted over, yet capable of renewed clearness and lustre. So was the soul originally created in the Image of God; so, being lost, that Image and the Name that it once bore can no more be read upon it; so being found, it is created anew in Christ Jesus.

But who is the woman? Is she not the Church, the Bride of Christ, she whose wealth and adornment consists in the souls which He has given to her care, which He, the Heavenly Bridegroom, will look for in that Day. Her task it is, lighting the Lamp of His Holy Word, to sweep diligently, no matter what confusion she may make, even to turn-

ing the world upside down, Acts xvii. 6, until she find them. The Church, when she faithfully does her work, after her Bridegroom's example, misses each one of her backsliding children, and never wearies in the search after them. The Church by her ministers watches for your soul, as having to give account. Her greatest rejoicing is in the recovery of these lost ones, in finding, in cleansing, in renewing the likeness to their Lord, which is only tarnished and crusted over, not yet altogether eaten away. Then she calls the Saints to rejoice with her upon earth. And her song of thanksgiving is echoed in Heaven by the Angels who share with Jesus in His love for the souls of men.

254. *The Prodigal Son.* St. Luke xv. 11-16.

A THIRD parable teaching the same lesson, and manifesting still more distinctly the intense love of our Father for His disobedient children ; teaching a special lesson to these most haughty and uncharitable Scribes and Pharisees who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others ! The whole character of the Jewish religion under the Old Covenant was exclusive. God intended it to be so, to a certain extent. He made His people to come forth from among the heathen ; He bade them to touch not the unclean thing, to separate themselves. Then they should be His chosen nation, His peculiar people, kings and priests before Him, and He would be their Father and their God.

At the same time He never gave them any grounds for despising the Gentiles, as if salvation were out of their reach. The Psalms especially call upon all the heathen to worship God, and to be

joyful in Him. Isaiah is full of prophecies that the heathen shall come in, full of assurances that God, the universal Father, is ever stretching forth His hands of invitation, defence, and succour. Still the old haughty spirit held its sway. Still it grew more bitter and more exclusive. Not only the heathen were despised as strangers to the Covenant of God, but the sinful Jew as well, the profligate and the careless. The Pharisee regarded these brothers of his not as sheep to be sought and found, but as unclean animals to be avoided and thrust out. Isa. lxxv. 5.

Little they understood their Father's love from the beginning! Little they understood His free bounty in their own election. He was a universal Father; all mankind were His children. These poor Publicans and sinners, aye, the heathen too, were all sons of the one Father; Mal. ii. 10; all brothers with the proudest Jew, all of the one family of God, all at first brought up in the same home under His care. Then came the separation. The younger son, the Gentile, in self-will, self-indulgence, and worldliness, took his portion and went away into a far country. There he soon spent his substance, the knowledge of God, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the power to keep God's holy laws. Down he sank into vice, into the slavery of the Devil, that cruel taskmaster, till, perishing with hunger, he came to himself. Penitent and seeking his ancient home, he is waited for, and seen a long way off. The Father runs to meet him. The kiss of affection seals his forgiveness. The best robe, the ring, the feast, the rejoicings, all tell of the good pleasure of God and of the Angels over the Gentile son restored once more to his place in his Father's house.

This was the Divine will for the younger son, the Gentile. Why does the elder son, the Jew, stand aloof and murmur? How is he harmed because his brother is saved and made welcome?

St. Luke alone relates this parable. He is writing for Gentiles, that he may strengthen their faith and hope with these words of their Lord. He had seen how this narrowness met them as they sought to be readmitted into the Home from which they had strayed. He had seen how Christian Gentiles were despised by Jews, sometimes even by Christian Jews. 1 Thess. ii. 16; Gal. ii. 4. And therefore he records this parable of rebuke to Israel after the flesh, of encouragement to Israel after the spirit. Rom. ii. 28, 29.

255. *The Prodigal Son departing.* St. Luke xv. 11-16.

THIS, like so many of the Lord's parables, bears a double interpretation. The two sons are types of the faithful and the unfaithful children of God, as well as of the Jew and the Gentile. We have the downward course traced for us in the earlier verses. The younger son, fretting under the restraints of his father's house, desires to go his own way, find his own friends, make his own pleasures. Already his love and trustfulness have sadly failed. His first decided step is the strange demand for the portion of goods which falls to him. As if it were his by right, not by his father's kindness; his too as soon as he chose to demand it, and not only after his father's death. This obtained, he will no longer be oppressed by his father's presence. Having departed in heart, he now departs in body, into a far country, where no loving eye shall control him, no loving voice expostulate with him.

Is not this the way of the soul which departs from

the living Lord, from its Father's Home? It begins with self-will. To such the Presence of God is not fulness of joy, the Voice of God is not wisdom, the Hand of God is not guidance, the House of God is not home, the service of God is not perfect freedom. It would have its powers free for its own indulgence; its reason to deny God, its body to gratify the fleshly appetites. It would go into a far country, forsaking God, Jerem. ii. 5; no longer seeing Him; if it were possible, no longer being seen by Him. There it can take its fill of sinful pleasure. What sort of pleasure! And with what companions!

A short-lived pleasure his! Speedily comes the mighty famine. And he has wasted his substance. He begins to be in want. Now we see the other side. He, a little while ago filled with every luxury, is a servant, keeping swine; so pinched that he would fain eat of their coarse food; begging from the passers-by, but begging in vain. No man gave unto him.

Is not this the soul in its far country? The false friends who crowded round it have stripped it of its self-respect, its forethought, its freedom, its gifts of nature as well as of grace. What has it gained? Ruin and death. Rom. vi. 21. It has spent all. And the famine has come, a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Amos viii. 11, 12. It begins to be in want. But, unhappily, not yet with the hunger and thirst after righteousness. In its extremity it takes service with a citizen of that far-off country, some evil spirit, and is made to degrade itself and defile itself as the slave of sin. For the swine was abomination to the Jew. Isa. lxvi. 17. Hungry yet, it sinks lower still, to feed upon the garbage which is served to the beasts. And for this, for the lowest wretchedness of unclean living, the

soul has left the Bread of Angels, the Fellowship of the Lord and of His Saints.

And no man gave unto him. For the only true charity is Christian love. Among the citizens of that country the beggared profligate had no friends, no, not those upon whom he had wasted all his substance. Even so the starving soul has none to feed it. It perishes with hunger. It began by losing itself. It now loses that for which it lost itself. What hope for it, unless it return to Him from whom it has fallen, and that speedily!

256. *The Prodigal Son returning.* St. Luke xv. 17-24.

THE completion of a man's ruin is the loss of himself, his degradation to the level of the brute beast in understanding and desires, until he have sunk into perfect contentment with it, or thorough despair. Then his case is hopeless. The beginning of restoration is his remembrance of better times, and reflection upon the state from which he has fallen. Rev. ii. 5. So, by degrees, he comes to himself, to his better self, his reason, his strength. Thus it was with the prodigal of the parable. Thus it is with the repenting soul. It comes to itself; it is renewed to something of the glory of its first creation. Herein is the blessedness of God's discipline; it brings us to our senses, to ourselves.

The prodigal's eyes are opened now, and he sees; sees that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and naked. He contrasts his condition with the comfort and fulness of the hired servants in his father's house. They have enough and to spare, while he is perishing with hunger. His pride is all crushed out of him by this time. There is nothing

for it but to return, to confess his unworthiness to be anything better than a servant. And he has confidence in his father's compassion that he will not be rejected.

Moreover there now strikes in upon his conscience a sense of having sinned against one greater than his father, even the Great Father in Heaven. Much of our slowness to repent rises from the idea that our faults are no more than offences against our neighbour. As if they were not sins against God; as if God had nothing to do with them! Before we can truly repent we must feel that every sin is a sin against Him.

And with this humility and this true sense of sin, we must keep in remembrance, if we would not despair, that God is our Father. No matter how the son offends, he is still a son. So, however deeply we fall, we are still God's children. Still our Father yearns for us, and waits for our return.

And he arose and came to his father. But the father has been beforehand with the son; the father is waiting, sees him a long way off, is moved to pity by his changed appearance, runs to meet him, falls upon his neck, and before he can speak has sealed his forgiveness with a kiss. See, now, how sound his repentance is. He does not take advantage of this gracious reception to hide his faults. Rather he is the more moved to confess them. He begins to speak of his sin and his unworthiness. But before he can get through all, his father has stopped him. The servants are ordered at once to bring out of their best, the best robe, the ring, the shoes. The fatted calf must be killed. The guests must be called to the feast, to rejoice over the son that was dead and is alive again, that was lost and is found.

This is true repentance—to confess our own unworthiness, to believe in our Father's love, to go to Him as the chief of sinners, to ask only the lowest place. Then He will receive us, and forgive, and restore us to all the privileges of sonship. He will be a Father unto us, and we shall be His sons and daughters according to His promise. 2 Cor. vi. 18.

257. *The Prodigal still a Son.* St. Luke xv. 17-24.

WHAT brought the prodigal son home? What made his repentance effectual? For there are two kinds of sorrow for sin, that of Peter and that of Judas; the godly sorrow which worketh repentance not to be repented of, and the sorrow of the world which worketh death. 2 Cor. vii. 10.

It was the remembrance of his father's love, the conviction that, ungrateful, dishonouring, mad, and wicked as he had been, he had not broken, and, so long as he lived, could not break, the tie of blood which united him as a son to his father. The father is still father; he himself is still son. In his direst extremity he never forgets, never doubts, this. He thinks of the well-fed servants of his father. He will arise and go to his father, and address him by that title,—‘My father.’ He admits that he is not worthy to be called *son*, yet he does not give up his right to speak as a son speaks. The father acknowledges all the claim, to the servants, and to the elder brother. This my son, this thy brother, was dead and is alive again. He had only left his place in the family for a while. He had not altogether forfeited it.

A truth of infinitely wide extent, of infinitely gracious blessedness, and consolation, and encour-

agement to every sinner in the world! For in this parable it certainly covers the Gentile as well as the Jew, the heathen as well as the Christian. Consider what power it gives to the preacher of the Word. He may go to the heathen, and tell them of the great Father, from whose House they have gone astray, into whose House they will again be welcomed, if only they will return and repent. He may go to the backsliding children in our Christian lands, and remind them that they have been baptized into Christ, and made children of God in a higher and closer sense, as being in Christ. Shall they be won back by being told that they are altogether strangers to the covenant, children of the devil, utterly cast out and forgotten? That is not Christ's way. For what hope would that bring, what encouragement? What love would it awaken, or what sorrow for His wounded love? Wanderers as they are, they are still *sons*. God is yearning over them with a *Father's* love. If they will return, they need not doubt of their acceptance. They will not have to wait, to knock, to faint, and to be rejected. Their Father waiteth to be gracious with more than an earthly father's love. The sinner, turning over his confession in his mind, even when a long way off, has found mercy. His Father has seen him, has come forth to meet him, and at his first word has received him back into all the privileges of his birth. He is a son of God, and God is his Father.

If men believed this more really, would they not come back from their sin more quickly and more penitently than they do? It is a father's love that they have sinned against. They are still His children. They have still the right to say, 'Our Father.' And while they are encouraged by this to

repent, let them not therefore presume. The sternest judgment is declared on those who bear the highest titles. The *children* of the Kingdom—if they repent not—are cast out into the outer darkness.

258. *The Elder Brother.* St. Luke xv. 25-32.

WITH joy in the father's heart, among his servants, among his friends, is there not joy everywhere? No. One there is who envies and grudges, as if he himself were wronged. The elder brother will have no share in their rejoicing. In vain his father comes out and entreats him. He is not to be persuaded. He points to his own steadfastness in past service and filial love. Never was so much as a kid given to him! Yet, as soon as this son of thine—but no brother of mine, he seems to say—has come, he who has wasted thy money in his wicked ways, for him thou hast killed the fatted calf!

In all this the parable condemns the Pharisees, and all who cherish anything of their proud and grudging spirit. It has its warnings too for those happier souls who may have been kept and guided by Divine grace. By that grace we—oh that we might say, we!—have been saved from continuance in any deadly sin. We have gone on from our youth up, trying conscientiously to do our best, for duty's sake; never, it may be, filled with any signal sense of Divine favour, any peculiar joy, and peace, and sweet communion. Then we see our brothers and sisters who have sinned their lives away, brought back into our Father's home. They cry for forgiveness, and it is granted them. They enjoy the full assurance that the absolution spoken on earth has been sealed for them in Heaven. We see

them light-hearted, bold, zealous, realising their Lord's Presence always, as well in their prayers and meditations as at His holy Altar. What is all this? we ask. Why such outpouring of spiritual favours on these, when we, who have toiled by day and watched by night, are left without? And we are angry, and murmur.

The father admits all that the elder brother urges. But his long and faithful service has not been overlooked, as he imagines. 'Son, thou art ever with me. All that I have is thine.' To have been always with his father, to have had such mutual confidence between them that neither cared to say—'This is mine,' and 'That is yours;' to have received no special gifts simply because nothing was withheld—that had been his. No need, moreover, for special rejoicing over one who had never caused the father special grief. But this poor brother, who had suffered so in body and spirit, was it not meet to give him some more than common proof that he was welcome, and restored? So in spiritual things. Is it nothing that our Father has kept us ever with Him? nothing that all things are ours? 1 Cor. iii. 21; nothing that we could always draw near to His Board, without fear of cherished mortal sin? nothing that we have not to grieve over years spent in vanity? And shall we grudge if our penitent brother, newly re-admitted to the communion of the Saints, should taste these good gifts with fresher delights and higher joys? We, having been always with our Father, should be able to trust Him. Our brother can hardly believe that he is again under his Father's roof. Would not his heart fail him, unless he were thus welcomed?

Love there is for each in our Father's heart. Why should we measure that love, and be jealous?

Blessed, in truth, is he who returns and is thus welcomed ! But more blessed surely is he to whom it is said, 'Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine ?'

259. *The Three Parables.* St. Luke xv.

THE three parables of this chapter ought to be read and considered together as three pictures of Divine love, each serving to explain the others. There is a difference in the fault of the thing lost, a difference too in the grief and care of the loser, in the joy of the finder.

The wandering of the sheep is not so much wilful perversity as stupidity, especially in the wide unenclosed pastures of eastern lands. The sheep may be lost by neglect of the shepherd ; and once strayed from the flock, it would wander farther and farther. The piece of money, as stamped with the image and superscription of the king, is a type of something higher than the sheep, a type of man created in the image of God, called by the Name of Christ, sealed with the Spirit, then falling away into the darkness of misbelief and the mire of sin. The son is the reasonable soul, richly endowed to discern between good and evil, now making his free choice, deliberately turning his back on his father for the pleasures of the world, the lusts of the flesh, and sinking into the slavery of the devil. What going astray can equal his in guilt ?

Then, again, the first two set forth rather the seeking love of God for the soul which makes no effort to return ; the third describes the willing conversion. Yet that conversion is, after all, the Father's doing, for none can come to the Saviour unless the Father draw him. St. John vi. 44. So,

by reading all three parables, we understand the thorough wilfulness of man's departing, the full perfection of the Lord's care and regret, and of His seeking, drawing, finding, and welcoming.

Great is the care of the shepherd who at once discovers that one of his hundred sheep is missing. Not one, not the least amongst so many, is forgotten by Him who knoweth His own sheep by name. So the greatness of the Divine care is shewn. But the shepherd would not feel the loss of one out of his hundred sheep so keenly as the woman would feel the loss of one out of her ten coins. These pieces of money, dear to her for so many reasons, heirlooms in her family, her own peculiar property, her adornment in her husband's eyes, a trust held for her daughter, how soon is one of these missed, how deeply regretted, how jealously and diligently sought for! Nevertheless, her vexation would be nothing to the father's grief over one of two sons, and over a departure under circumstances of such wild self-will and heartless ingratitude. Infinite is His love; infinite our sin. And yet His love outweighs our sin. It seeks us, draws us, brings us back even from the farthest country. And when we have come back, it deals with us as if the gain were all His, as if there were no good thing which he could withhold from us in His joy.

260. *The Unjust Steward.* St. Luke xvi. 1-13.

VERY likely some piece of successful knavery was just now the subject of common talk, and the Lord made it the text of a spiritual lesson. Such things must have occurred every now and then in those times, as they do now. A certain rich man had a manager over his servants and his property,

such as Eliezer was to Abraham, and Joseph to Potiphar. Gen. xxiv. 2; xxxix. 4; St. Luke xii. 42. Called to account for dishonesty and threatened with dismissal, this man considers how best he can provide for himself under his altered circumstances. Labour is not to his taste; begging is disgraceful. He must make some arrangement with the debtors which will secure their goodwill. He therefore sends for them, asks each the amount of his debt, and bids him at once take his reckoning and write a lesser sum. It may be that they were tenants who were bound to pay their lord a certain proportion of the produce. Or it may be that they had purchased, through the steward, so much of his corn and wine and oil, and the steward, thinking that he could not incur any heavier punishment by adding to his wrong-doing, allows them to represent their debt below its real amount. Either way he benefits the debtors at his employer's expense, and lays them under obligation to him. This too comes to the master's ears, and injured as he is, he cannot help admiring the shrewdness of the servant. Cunning and dishonest as it was, it shewed a keen eye to his own interests.

It is this keenness in providing for the future which Christ's disciples ought to imitate. But while the children of this world are wise in their generation, the children of light are negligent and foolish. We are, every one of us, stewards of God. The good things of nature, of estate, of grace which we enjoy are not really our own to do with as we like. They are our Master's. The time will come when He will summon us to give an account of our stewardship. How shall we answer Him? Have we used His goods to His honour, the furtherance of His work, to the advantage of our fellow-servants? If we have

been faithful in all things—well ! If not, had we not better take counsel in ourselves, lest we find ourselves homeless and friendless in that time ? So use thy Lord's earthly things that thou mayest therewith win to thyself heavenly things. Especially use thine earthly wealth, the unrighteous mammon, in works of charity, that the poor who have been blessed by thee may befriend thee with their prayers, that thy home may be among the Angels and Saints in the everlasting habitations. That is our Blessed Lord's counsel to us. This is our only safe course. Making to thyself friends in this way, thou wilt be a faithful steward to thy Master in Heaven, He will entrust thee with His true riches, and give thee to possess for thyself. But do this, and be faithful, with singleness of heart. For that double dealing which brought the unjust steward his worldly advantage, is impossible with God. One must be our master, God or Mammon ; we cannot serve both if we would. And by that one Master we must stand or fall.

261. *Covetousness and Hypocrisy.* St. Luke xvi.
14-18.

THE parable of the unjust steward was spoken to the disciples in warning that they should beware of covetousness, and so employ earthly wealth as to lay up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come. 1 Tim. vi. 19. In it the Lord condemned a besetting sin of the Pharisees, who were lovers of money. They hear and receive His warnings with derisive sneers. Therefore He turns directly to them, with solemn words as became one who was rebuking the authorized teachers of the people. Holy as they were in their own eyes, they were de-

ceiving themselves ; God knew their hearts. That which they esteemed so highly—their fair outside show, was abomination in His sight. Col. ii. 23. And they had set up this idol of Mammon in their hearts, which ought to have been Temples of the Living God.

The Lord here, in His discerning of spirits, does not wait for a reply from them. At least, no reply or remark of theirs is given. He follows the train of thought which must have been in their minds. Their self-justification could not stand before an all-seeing God. They were, in their covetousness, idolaters. They were rejecting Him, and holding—or rather thinking that they held—to the Law and the Prophets. Therefore He goes on to declare that the Law and the Prophets were but as guides to lead the people of God to their better Teacher, to the Kingdom that should last for ever. When John the Baptist came, the Law and the Prophets had finished their work, and were immediately to be fulfilled. John was the messenger preparing the way of the Christ. And Christ was the end of the Law. Now the Kingdom of God was being preached as at hand, was already among them. And though Scribes and Pharisees refused to enter in themselves, and would have hindered others, yet the humble, the needy, the penitent would not be hindered. They were pressing in, and taking that Kingdom by force. The Publicans and sinners had found the King, and had sat at meat with Him.

And the King was there. Yet not to take away the Law, but to fulfil it ; to fulfil it more thoroughly than those who professed to be its interpreters and teachers. They had made that Law of none effect by their traditions. He would not suffer one letter of it to fail. In one point especially they had made

that Law of none effect—in their whole treatment of marriage. By their authority as teachers of the Law, they allowed a husband to divorce his wife on the very slightest pretexts. He would remind them of the original and perfect law, given in the time of man's innocency. Husband and wife are one flesh. The husband who puts away his wife and marries another woman is an adulterer. The man who marries a divorced woman, whatever the grounds of the divorce, has committed adultery. But very shortly the Lord speaks further upon this matter.

Again He is putting Himself above Moses and the prophets, claiming an authority equal with the One Lawgiver, that is, God. And in the same breath He goes on to speak the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, in which He shews how their covetousness and self-indulgence, and fair outside, end in destruction and perdition.

262. *The Rich Man and Lazarus.* St. Luke xvi.
19-25.

THE most striking and terrible of all the Lord's parables! A rich man surrounded by all that can make life enjoyable and glorious, without one single fault laid to his charge, passes from this life into a state of indescribable misery. While a poor man, of whose virtues nothing is told us, passes from earthly misery to the Paradise of the just. Perhaps here, again, Jesus founded His parable upon some real history. Perhaps He here lifted the veil from the prison-house of the unseen world, and shewed these Pharisees how it fared with one, like themselves, who had justified himself before men, trusting in himself that he was righteous, and had gone to his

grave with much of religious ceremony and worldly pomp.

What sort of a man was this ?

Rank, wealth, pride, and self-indulgence in his case went together. He was rich, as many were. What was the harm ? Clothed in purple, as a prince, and fine linen, and all the pride and luxury of dress, his table daily spread as a banquet, as much for show as indulgence—that was his life. No greater sin was laid to his charge than this. But this was abomination in the sight of God. All was for the world ; all for self.

So it went on day after day. And at the rich man's gate was laid one Lazarus, a beggar man, diseased in body, happy if he might have the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. For nothing better was vouchsafed him ; nothing of that sumptuous fare. He was allowed to remain, no more. The dogs came about him as one already half dead. They who brought him to the rich man's gate were too poor or too careless of him to wait upon him through the day.

To his suffering life the end came at last. No ceremonious funeral for him. A pauper's grave, unmarked, unremembered, that is his. But the patient abiding of the meek has been marked by the great Father, and the beggar is carried by the Angels into Abraham's bosom. What a change for him ! Just now the steps of the rich man's palace, the hungry dogs around ! Now the halls of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Banquet of the King, the bosom of Abraham, and the joys of Paradise ! And what for the rich man ? He too dies. For him the costly funeral, the marble tomb graven with his titles and his virtues. But what of himself ? Whither has he gone ?

In hell he lifts up his eyes, being in torments !

A terrible, a most awful ending !

And again, what was his fault ?

Let us not go beyond what is written. No injustice, no intemperance, no cruelty is laid against him, no one special sin. Herein lies the value as well as the awfulness of the warning. He just lived for himself. Nothing done to the glory of God ! Nothing done for the good of his neighbour ! A steward of God's gifts, he had wasted his Master's goods, by spending them on himself. He had made no friends with his unrighteous Mammon. Cast out of his stewardship and called to his account, he had none to plead for him.

In these days of wealth, and pride, and self-indulgence, the precise lesson of this parable needs to be studied. We live for ourselves, forgetting God, forgetting our neighbour, content to have done no harm. It is the fault of the poor as well as of the rich. And this is the end of a godless, loveless, selfish life :—' In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.'

263. *The Rich Man's Prayers.* St. Luke xvi. 24-31.

AND in hell the rich man lifted up his eyes, being in torments. This is not Gehenna, the final place of punishment, but Hades, the prison-house of the departed between death and judgment, the hell into which the Lord descended and remained from Good Friday evening to the morning of Easter Day. There on one side, in Paradise, or Abraham's bosom, the souls of the righteous are in the Hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. Wisdom iii. 1. On the other hand, separated by the great and impassable gulf, the souls of sinners suffer already.

What an awakening for this rich man, after a life in which every desire of the flesh was freely and instantly indulged. He is in torment. And he sees the poor man whom he had neglected numbered among the Saints, filled with all joy. He is the poor man now, while Lazarus is rich.

Yet may there not be some hope for him, some alleviation possible? He is a Son of Abraham. Surely Abraham will relieve his son; surely Lazarus will gladly come on an errand of mercy. Oh for one drop, only one drop, of water to cool his tongue! He asks in vain. He had made no friends with the unrighteous mammon that once was his. There is none to help.

Abraham's reply is short and stern. 'Son'—he does not deny the sonship, but there was no title to Life in the relationship after the flesh—'remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.' For the rich man had lived as if the only life were the life on earth, the only good things the eating and drinking and being merry. He had had his reward. St. Matt. vi. 5. Lazarus had had the evil things, and endured through all. Moreover, for this other reason, what the rich man asked could not be. The impassable gulf yawned between them, fixed for ever.

It is vain to plead for himself now. What if his brothers should come into this same awful end! He is not so vile but that he would, if possible, save them, and there is yet time. May not Lazarus be sent to warn them? No; they have their means of grace, and sufficient. But the petition is again urged most intensely that a sign be given them. A face and a voice from the dead will compel them to repent. So we should think. Yet what is the final reply? Those who will not hear Moses and the

prophets will not repent even if one from the dead spoke to them.

So it was. Lazarus rose from the dead. But the Jews would not believe in Jesus who had raised him. They were only the more bitter against Jesus, and against Lazarus too. Jesus Himself rose from the dead. And they persecuted the disciples who bore witness of His Resurrection. Perhaps we think for ourselves,—If only some sign were given us to make us be quite sure, we would at once leave our sins and turn to God. We really think so. But it is only delusion. We Christians have more than Moses and the Prophets. We have Christ and His Apostles. If we will not hear them, no such sign as we ask would move us. We should not repent any more though one came unto us from the dead.

264. *The Life of the Departed.* St. Luke xvi. 24-31.

WHAT will be our condition after death?

The opinion of the Jews was that the spirit received its sentence immediately after death, and was carried to its own place, there to be comforted or tormented until the general judgment of the Great Day. All that the Lord and His Apostles say falls in with this view. They never speak of the spirit as subject to any change like the death of the body. Jesus, dying on the Cross, promised the penitent thief that he should be with Him that same night in Paradise, and then He committed His own spirit into His Father's hands. He declares that the dead are all living unto God. St. Luke xx. 38. If He and the Apostles call the death of the body a sleep, they do not mean that the spirit is unconscious; but that while the body is buried

in peace the spirit liveth for evermore, present with the Lord, which is far better. St. Peter writes of the Lord Himself, as put to death in the flesh but alive in the spirit, and preaching to the spirits in their place of keeping. 1 St. Peter iii. 18, 19. St. John, in the Revelation, ch. vi. 9-11, saw the souls of them that had been slain. He heard their intercession for the Church on earth. He saw the comfort vouchsafed to them. Moses and Elijah, again, were seen by the Apostles speaking with Jesus on the holy Mount, as if the Saints were, equally with the Angels, watching the accomplishment of man's salvation. St. Paul, again, speaks of his own vision of the third Heaven, and of Paradise, into which he was caught up, hearing unspeakable words which might not be repeated on earth. 2 Cor. xii. 1-4. This parable especially throws light on the life beyond the grave. The rich man, in his torments, is possessed of consciousness, memory, and affection. He perceives Abraham. He recognises Lazarus. He thinks, with anxiety, of his five brethren. He entreats for himself, and for them.

All this tells of an active life among the departed, a very blessed life of joy for those who have died in a state of grace, a very fearful life of suffering for those who have died in a state of sin.

We hold, therefore, that between Death and Judgment the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord are living in joy and felicity; not yet entered into their final reward; waiting for their Lord's coming, and for the resurrection of the body; learning much that they could not know here; receiving light, refreshment, grace, purifying, perfection; lovingly interested in all that the Church militant on earth is doing and suffering. Heb. xii. 1.

For themselves they are freed from sin, assured of salvation; worshipping before the Heavenly Altar; knowing, and known by, each other in that blessed home of waiting and of joy.

And the spirits of them that depart in a state of deadly sin, they too have gone to their own place; to a fearful looking-for of judgment to come, in torments, with no hope of passing the great gulf which separates them from the Saints.

Pray then that thou mayest die a good death, if thou wouldest hope for a merciful judgment. For what the Lord finds thee, when He summons thee, such shalt thou be when He judges thee, such shalt thou remain through all eternity. Rev. xxii. 11.

265. *Warnings of Offences and Unprofitableness.*
St. Luke xvii. 1-10.

IT was but likely that in a ministry of three years the Lord would have occasion to repeat warnings, just as He repeated instructions. Already He had cautioned the disciples against leading others into sin. St. Matt. xviii. 6, 7. Then He spoke, having an innocent child before Him. Now He renews this caution, grieved, it would seem, by the faithless opposition of the Pharisees, who had derided Him when He spoke the parable of the unjust steward. In vain He had urged upon His hearers the same prudence in spiritual matters which worldly men employed in worldly matters. They jested and sneered, and by their continued opposition caused the common people to offend and to reject Jesus. St. John vii. 48. This same covetous, self-indulgent, unbelieving spirit had, no doubt, held its place in the rich man and his five

brethren, each making the other to offend ; one represented as already suffering, the others as yet rejecting, and likely to reject to the end, the warnings of Moses and the Prophets. Woe it was to these last ; woe it is to the Pharisees, in that they make their brethren to stumble.

The disciple's duty it is to take up and re-echo the word of warning, to rebuke the erring brother, and on his repentance to forgive him. So instead of stumbling he shall be raised up, restored, and encouraged to stand and to walk uprightly. Nor this, once only, but seven times daily if need be ; seventy times seven forgivenesses ere the week have gone round. St. Matt. xviii. 22.

Though they had heard these sayings before, the disciples were slow to receive them. Was it really so awful a thing to lead a brother into sin ? Was such repeated forgiveness required ? Only by faith could they receive these sayings. Therefore they beseech Him,—‘ Add to us Faith.’

He seems to reply that they are right in asking for faith, and that they will be wise in asking for much faith, that faith of which He had spoken before, strong as the principle of life in the little seed. Then they might say to the sycamine tree which overshadowed their path, ‘ Be thou plucked up and planted in the sea ;’ and it should obey them.

But you have not this faith,—this is His argument,—and herein lies the cause ; that you look upon yourselves as profitable servants, doing your Master's work so well as to make Him your debtor. You are claiming from Him wages and thanks, claiming a reward not as of grace, but as of debt. Does the Master who has a slave bought with his money, excuse him as soon as half his work is done,

and bid him rest and eat? Does he, when the day's service is fully rendered, thank and praise that slave? The slave has but done his duty, no more. And what are the disciples but the Lord's slaves, created by God out of nothing, purchased with the Blood of Jesus, all their power of working given them by His Holy Spirit? 1 Tim. i. 12. Let them do all, they are still no more than unprofitable servants. All their reward is of grace, not of debt. 1 Cor. ix. 16. Till they understand their own unprofitableness they cannot have faith. Therefore, having not faith they must seek it; and having obtained it, they will be able to do all things through Christ who strengtheneth them.

266. *The fiery Zeal of James and John.* St. Luke
ix. 51-56.

THOUGH this passage is found in the earlier part of St. Luke's history, it belongs, undoubtedly, to the later period of the ministry, to the time when Jesus had finally left Galilee, and had stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. It was no longer the going round from city to city, doing good. He was bent now upon the last great work, of which He had said, 'How am I straitened until it be accomplished!'—even His Death, which could not be out of Jerusalem, and His Ascension, or receiving up into His glory. The Seventy were still going before Him, and they had entered into a city of the Samaritans, there to make ready for Him when He came in faint and weary.

But the Samaritans would not receive Him. The Feasts and the Temple at Jerusalem were nothing to them. They worshipped upon their own mountain of Gerizim, and maintained a never-dying

feud with those who said that men ought to worship at Jerusalem. St. John iv. 20. On this account many Galileans were accustomed to avoid Samaria altogether, and to go to Jerusalem by the eastern side of Jordan. Touched at this dishonour done to their Master, and true to their name—Boanerges, sons of Thunder—James and John would have called down fire from Heaven to consume them, even as Elijah did upon the men sent to arrest him. 2 Kings i. 10-12. That would have been indeed a sign from Heaven, punishing and convincing.

And if the Gospel had been but a repetition of the Law, such punishment upon those who rejected Jesus would not have been so surprising. Though even so, the punishment would have been more severe than that of eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. Moreover, we must remember that the Saints are not so set before us for examples that we may venture to condemn and to punish as they did. What was right in Moses, and Phineas, and Elijah, for instance, under the special teaching of God's direct revelation, may not be right for us who live under the general teaching of the new law of love.

Jesus rebuked this outburst of ill-considered zeal. 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.' After having been so long time with Him, they ought to have known His purposes, that He came not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. St. John iii. 17. They were yet to learn that they, the sons of Thunder, were to prove their name by their ministering the Word with power; that the only fire which they might call down from Heaven was the Fire of Love, the melting, softening, kindling Fire of the Holy Spirit; lighting once more the smoking flax that it should be a light unto the world; burning

out all their stains, and cleansing the heart by its sanctifying flame.

And they went to another village. So He forgives. So He manifests Himself meek and lowly in heart. Example to us, that we bear injuries with meekness, leaving it to God to avenge! Comfort to us, who have so often refused to receive Him, that His love and pity are almost inexhaustible, that He will go away rather than punish, if perchance He may find us willing to receive Him when He shall next offer Himself as our guest!

267. *The Ten Lepers.* St. Luke xvii. 11-19.

ON this journey towards Jerusalem the afflicted are found, as usual, in the Lord's path. His coming was watched for. At the entrance to one of the villages ten lepers met Him, standing afar off, as the law required, yet, though afar off, making their request known unto Him with loud voice.

By the law of Moses, lepers were forbidden to dwell in the cities, Lev. xiii. 46, or to approach their fellow-men. On the high roads they were required to give warning of their presence by the frequent cry of 'Unclean!' They would, therefore, naturally herd together in fellowship of suffering; and these ten, having heard of Jesus of Nazareth, take counsel together to ask from Him that blessed gift of cleansing which no earthly physician can give. There is true humility shewn by their cry, 'Jesus, Master, have pity on us!' great faith in His power and His compassion; due reverence by their respect for the law in thus standing afar off. They afford a profitable, and to some a much-needed, example of reverence combined with earnestness of prayer. While we are not to be so fearful as to shun the Lord's

presence, we need not be profane or irreverent because we know Him to be willing and able to save all who call upon His Name.

His reply is not what they expected. It is not, 'I will; be ye clean;' but, 'Go, shew yourselves to the priests.' Now the priests were God's appointed ministers to decide upon all cases of leprosy. Lev. xiii., xiv. This was a further trial of their faith. To what purpose should they go to the priests, when there was no sign of the leprosy abating? Nevertheless, He has commanded, and they go. And as they went they were cleansed. There is His reward for their obedience.

What shall they do now? Return at once to thank their benefactor while they can find Him; or hasten at once to the priest to obtain the formal assurance that they are clean? Selfishness prompts one thing, gratitude another. And one only is grateful. One only returns to worship at the feet of Jesus, giving Him thanks and glorifying God. And He was a Samaritan, one of the foreign race brought into the land at the captivity, imperfect in his knowledge, unsound in his faith, shut out from the Jewish worship. Yet he, and he alone, proves his faith by his gratitude and by his worship of the mighty Healer.

Even He who knew the weakness and ingratitude of man's heart marvels at this. Ten cleansed! One only found giving thanks, and he a stranger! *Their* blessing is ended therefore, for they are not worthy of more. *His* blessing in the cleansing of his body is followed by grace for his soul. 'Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.'

Thus is the Lord ever willing to give, ever willing to save. Each gift is intended to stir us up to thankfulness. Each act of gratitude on our part

opens the windows of Heaven wider. Yet here the faith of many fails. They think that they have all that they want ; or that He cannot, or will not, give more ; or they are so intent upon the enjoyment of the mercy granted them that they forget to turn and thank Him. And so the best and chiefest mercy of all, the being made *perfectly* whole, is lost to them, perhaps for ever.

268. *Thanksgiving.* St. Luke xvii. 15-19.

TEN cleansed ! And only one returns to give glory to God ! Even He who knew what was in man speaks as astonished and shocked. We feel the same as we read. We think, ' Had I been one of the cleansed, I would have returned with the Samaritan. I would have knelt at Jesus' feet, glorifying God ; and after this proof of His goodwill, I would have asked the same gift of cleansing for my soul.' Easy words to say now ! No doubt we are sincere in saying them. But, tried by our daily obedience, they are too much like an empty boast.

To put it quite plainly ;—we are confident that we should have behaved like the grateful Samaritan, not like the ungrateful Jews. We feel indignant at our confidence being doubted. For we abhor ingratitude as the most shameful and heartless of sins.

Yet, in condemning these, do we not condemn ourselves ? See what Jesus has done for us. Consider how we repay Him. It is no mere speaking the word of power for which *we* have to thank Him ; no mere bodily disease from which He has cleansed *us*. Our *soul* was unclean, befouled, poisoned, eaten away with the leprosy of sin. At the same time we hardly felt our misery, if at all.

We knew not where to look for help. We were by nature ignorant of His compassion and of His power. We never put ourselves in His way, never cried, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy.' Of His free grace He pitied us. He came down from Heaven, taking the likeness of sinful flesh, cleansing and renewing our nature in Himself, fighting with our enemies and conquering them, dying for us when we were yet sinners that in Him we might have life. This is the crowning act of His countless mercies. Strain your imagination to the greatest of undeserved favours; you have not then reached the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ, of the Son of God, the Eternal Life, dead upon the Cross that sinful man might reign with Him in glory.

There is the healing of our leprosy, and its cost !

Where ought we to be, then ? At His feet, surely, worshipping Him, glorifying Him, giving Him thanks not only with our lips but in our lives ; in everything giving thanks, because, by the light of the Cross, we can see His mercy in everything. That is where we should be ; body, soul, and spirit sanctified to His service out of pure gratitude for that which He has done.

And now, where are we ? Is our gratitude such as this ?

We are dumb. For we have not done even as well as these nine. They, at least, were obeying His command ; they, at least, were intent upon securing one of His blessings. Selfish as their conduct was, and ungrateful, it shewed faith. But we are not content with turning our backs. Some of His blessings we receive without a thought of the Giver. Others we cast away, or fling back upon in disdain and contempt. We will not have

His salvation. We will not let Him heal us. We dishonour His Holy Name by which we are called. We crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to open shame. Heb. vi. 6. This it is which makes His love so infinitely wonderful, that He foresaw our ingratitude even when He stooped to die for us. Confess it; the ingratitude of the Christian to his Saviour is the basest, the most wonderful ingratitude the world has ever seen.

269. *The Coming of Christ's Kingdom.* St. Luke xvii. 20-37.

THREE years had passed since Jesus took up the preaching of John the Baptist, preaching that the Kingdom of God was at hand. Men might therefore reasonably ask, both disciples and opponents, how long before that Kingdom was to be manifested. For they were expecting its coming to be preceded by visible and awful signs, by which all might be warned in time to lay aside their worldly pleasures and cares, and prepare themselves to meet their King.

Greatly were they mistaken. Within them, inwardly in the heart of each, His Kingdom was to be expected and received, as some had already received it. The servants of the King already had their citizenship in Heaven, Phil. iii. 20, and by doing His will, were hastening the glorious manifestation of His Kingdom.

That is His answer to the Pharisees. To his disciples He is free to speak more explicitly. And He admonishes them that they too will have their faith tried, by the delay of His coming. They will suffer, and long for Him to avenge them. But they must not be deceived by false pretensions. Not

with observation, but suddenly as the lightning, He shall come. First, however, He Himself must suffer and be rejected. For He is with them now to redeem, and not to punish. The world, therefore, mistaking His patience, will overlook His warnings, frequent as they may be, and convincing in their effect upon those who watch and read and understand. As before those two great visitations of old, by water and by fire, the world went its own way, heeding neither the preaching of Noah nor the remonstrances of Lot, taking its fill of pleasure to the very day of destruction, so shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

And what is here said of the visitations of the past, and the crowning visitation of the end of the world, bears also upon the destruction soon to come upon the Holy City of Jerusalem, and upon the summons which must come upon every single soul. General signs are given that the Day of Visitation is shortly to come upon the world, upon Jerusalem, upon every child of man. We know the signs of old age; we know not the day of death. Worldly pleasures may close our memories and blind our eyes. Some even of those who are prepared to fly in time will be lost by clinging to their earthly idols. Lot's wife, no unrighteous woman, saved by Angels, looked back only, and became a pillar of salt. The warning may be short. He that readeth must run forthwith. Hab. ii. 2. Nay, the warning and the call may come together. In the calm sleep of night, in the busy toil of day, the call will come, separating the closest companions, taking one, leaving the other. That is the universal warning, given to all long since, to watch and be ready, to sacrifice all, the body's life even, that so the soul may have its reward in the Regeneration

of the life to come. St. Matt. xix. 28. Sudden may be the summons to death, sudden the summons to the Final Judgment.

Where shall this be; this separation and removal? they ask. Wherever there is spiritual death, there the ministers of punishment shall never be wanting.

270. *The Importunate Widow.* St. Luke xviii. 1-8.

FROM this delay in the manifestation of Christ's Kingdom there arises in the world a careless living in pleasure, in the Church a faintness and doubt. This then is the Lord's counsel. In thought of the Judgment the sinner must repent, the disciple must endure; both must watch; both must pray always and not faint.

Already, after teaching the disciples how to pray, the Lord by the parable of the three loaves had taught them the power of persevering prayer. St. Luke xi. 5-10. He now puts forth another parable teaching the same lesson. Many such unjust judges might be found in eastern cities, men with no fear of God, no regard for their own character. Their favour was always to be bought. The rich and powerful were sure of a verdict; the poor and friendless had too much cause to rue an appeal to them. 'No hope for this widow!' one would say. And yet she gained her point with him. How? By her importunity. As suitors in the East will at the present time seat themselves day after day at a rich man's door until his patience is wearied out, and he gives them what they seek in order to be rid of them, so she came again and again, with her continual cry, 'Avenge me of mine adversary.' And at last the unjust judge, while he boasted in himself of his contempt of God and man, did avenge her.

The lesson of the parable is by contrast. If this man avenged the widow, how much more will God avenge His own elect ! The judge had no principle of justice, no feeling of compassion. God is just and full of compassion. The judge could only be addressed at certain times. The ear of God is always open to our prayers. Then, again, the widow had, evidently, no friend to speak for her ; we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. She had no encouragement to ask ; we have the promise, ' Ask, and ye shall receive.' She had no help in her petition ; we have received the spirit of grace and supplication. She was a stranger to the judge ; we have been brought into God's household, made His children, allowed to cry, ' Abba, Father.' She had received no kindness from the judge ; God has given us His Son ; will He not with Him freely give us all things ? She had nothing to plead in her favour, no gift which she could offer. We may urge that God's honour is concerned in our salvation. Deut. ix. 28. We may go to God, beseeching Him by virtue of the one perfect offering and propitiation of His dear Son, which we present before Him upon our Altars. What gift can we bring Him so perfect and so availing as this ? She prayed, helpless and friendless. We pray almost by right ; a right, based not on our merits, but solely on His mercy and promise. Heb. vi. 17, 18. If therefore the unjust judge granted the widow's petition, how much more will the just and merciful and true God grant us ours ! For hundreds of years Saints on earth have echoed the cry of Saints in Paradise, ' How long, O Lord, how long !' Rev. vi. 10. And yet the punishment of the Church's adversaries does not come. Shall she then faint, and cease from prayer ? No, the

whole Church, and each single soul, must pray, and pray always, in faith. Though He seems to delay, yet with Him a thousand years is as one day. His vengeance will come, and when it begins it will also make an end. When the Son of Man cometh, will the Church be found praying this unwearied prayer of faith?

271. *The Pharisee and the Publican.* St. Luke
xviii. 9-14.

THE parable of the importunate widow, with its lesson that men ought always to pray and not to faint, would give the Pharisees a momentary triumph. Neglect of prayer could never be laid to their charge! All the world knew their prayerfulness. St. Matt. vi. 5. Therefore they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.

The Teacher has a word for these also. To pray often is worth nothing, unless the prayer be made in a right spirit. Let them listen, and take heed.

Two men went up into the Temple to pray. So far, both do well. But what is their prayer? In what spirit is it offered?

The Pharisee, standing forward in a conspicuous place, too proud to mingle with the rest of the worshippers, thanks God that he is not as other men are, no bold and hardened sinner, not like this fellow, this Publican! who has come in with him. He runs through the good service which he has done to God, the fast twice in each week, the punctual payment to religious purposes of the tenth part of everything, down to the very pot-herbs in his garden. St. Matt. xxiii. 23.

A remarkable, a strange prayer this! It asks for

nothing. The man prays within himself, so taken up with his own fancied excellence that he really has no sight of the all-holy God. His only thought of his brethren is that they have sinned all manner of deadly sin, and are cursed, to be avoided, abhorred, boasted against. The Publican, to be sure, has some good in him, for he has come to pray; but how wide the difference between him and the speaker! There is no sin confessed; for he is not conscious of any wrong-doing; he has, instead, plenty of good service to recount. In fact, he has rendered God more than was required; two days of fasting in the week, and scrupulous payment of offerings from the very least of his gains. Yes, he will thank God for this. It is well with him.

What a prayer! What a way of rendering thanks!

But the Publican—how does he pray? Standing afar off, owning his unworthiness, not lifting up his eyes for very shame, Ezra ix. 6, smiting his breast in token of his deep sorrow, St. Luke xxiii. 48, he makes his petition, careless who may observe his actions or hear his confession—God, be merciful to me the sinner! As if he were the very chiefest of sinners. 1 Tim. i. 15. This man claims nothing. In a few short words he has asked, and asked acceptably, for that which alone will bring salvation—mercy.

We, who have been taught by the Church to pray, know which prayer was most pleasing to the Almighty. The Pharisee, with all his show of devotion, never prayed a better prayer than this. If he had never prayed in this spirit, he had never *really* prayed at all. Pardon for sin he had not asked, and pardon for sin is not won by him. The proud boaster has taken nothing by his self-righteousness. It is the humble penitent who is exalted

by the Divine favour, being justified from his sins. Ps. cxxxviii. 6. It is the spirit which we bring to our prayer which avails with God, whether our words be many or few. Until we have confessed our sin and asked for mercy, there is no pardon for us, no favour, no hope of blessing here, or of eternal life hereafter. 1 St. John i. 8, 9.

272. *The Righteousness of the Pharisees.* St. Luke xviii. 11, 12; St. Matt. v. 20.

WHEN things have passed into a proverb, it is hard to look at them in any new light. For instance, the Pharisees are so sternly condemned for their hypocrisy, their covetousness, their cunning distortion of the ancient law, their resistance to the Lord's words and works, that we look upon them as utterly and entirely bad. Vicious, false, hypocritical, covetous, without a spark of real religion—so they seem to us, and so we condemn them. We thank God that we are not as these Pharisees, at any rate.

But there are other sins besides hypocrisy; and this we are almost in danger of forgetting in our rude hatred and disgust at it. We who condemn these Pharisees, are we so much better, after all? Formal and mistaken as their righteousness was, had it not about it a stern resolution which may put us to shame?

While the Lord condemns the Pharisee for his pride, his self-confidence, his contempt for others, He gives us no ground for suspecting his boast to be unfounded. The man was quite sincere, in one sense. He was neither an extortioner, nor unjust. Keeping himself from great fleshly sins, he refused to receive as his guests men who were notorious

offenders against morality. In his outward life, he was—no question about it—ininitely more worthy of respect than this Publican. As for his attention to his religious duties, he went beyond the law. Moses had appointed but one fast-day in the year, the great day of Atonement. Lev. xvi. 29-34. Like most devout Jews, he was not satisfied with this. Twice a week he kept under his body, taking no food till sunset. Moses commanded to give the tenth part of the fruit and of the young of the cattle. Numb. xviii. 21. He gave the tenth part of *every single thing* that he gained, every fruit, every leaf; a second tithe, as some interpret, in addition to that which the law required. So that he paid away to religion and charity what amounted to the fifth part of his income. Faulty as he might be, in these things he evidently mortified his fleshly lusts, and his covetous desires.

How stand we in comparison? We thank God that we are no hypocrites, like this Pharisee. Have we the same shrinking from the extortioners, the unjust, the adulterers of our own time, supposing that we ourselves are clear of these sins? To keep Lent, to fast once in every week, or even once a year on Good Friday, is ridiculous to our world. To give tithes at all, of free gift, beyond that which the law has charged on our land, and which therefore is not ours to give or withhold, never enters into the head of one man in a thousand. We take our stand by this Pharisee, this man of frequent prayer, much almsgiving, stern mortification, and pointing the finger at him, thank God that we are not as he; we, who read what Jesus and His disciples say about prayer, and almsgiving, and self-denial; we who are taught by their words and example not only that these things are required, but in what spirit they

may be done acceptably. We sin boldly. And we are quite satisfied because we are not hypocrites.

O sad self-delusion! O worse hypocrisy than that of old! As if we, because we are warned against false appearances, are therefore justified in neglecting the reality of faithful service!

273. *Marriage and Divorce.* St. Matt. xix. 1-9;
St. Mark x. 1-12.

AT some point of His journey the Lord, having passed through Galilee and Samaria, St. Luke xvii. 11, crossed the Jordan, and came by its eastern bank into the coasts of Judæa. While the people resort unto Him for healing and instruction, the Pharisees come tempting Him. Twice He had spoken of divorce, absolutely forbidding it except for unfaithfulness, absolutely forbidding the marriage of the divorced wife. St. Matt. v. 32; St. Luke xvi. 18. He must either withdraw those words, or stand directly opposed to the law of Moses, which allowed divorce and a new marriage on much slighter pretexts. Deut. xxiv. 1-4.

The Lord gives no direct reply, but refers them to an earlier and greater authority. God's original creation ordained marriage as a holy and Divine union of one man with one woman, that they twain should become one flesh. That which God has so joined together man is not to put asunder. Great as Moses was, the God of Moses is greater.

They argue that Moses allowed the wife to be put away, provided a writing of divorce were given her. Moses permitted it, the Lord replies, as a relief to a generation which was too weak to bear the perfect and original law. From the beginning it was not so. And Moses, while allowing it, required this formal document to be carefully drawn

up, signed, and witnessed, by way of giving time for reflection, and of saving the woman from false accusations afterwards. He feared, too, the cruelty of your hearts, lest, not being able to divorce the wife you were weary of, you should ill-treat or murder her. Thus the original law was relaxed.

Then Jesus confirms to them the original law of Marriage. The husband may not put away his wife, except for the single cause of fornication. Unchastity, before or after marriage, justified the divorce. Even the divorced wife was not free to marry again until her husband's death. The law of Moses punished the adulterous wife with stoning, in which case the husband would be freed. St. John viii. 5. Otherwise the burden must be borne. Marriage with another would be no marriage; only legalized adultery. Husband and wife are bound together, so the Church interprets, so long as they both do live. This seems the simplest, as well as the oldest, and most commonly received, explanation of the Lord's words.

The severe Jewish law, in stoning the adulteress to death at once, set the injured husband free altogether. The Christian Church, leaving the State to deal with the offence as it will, punishes it with spiritual censures, and repels the sinner of either sex from the Lord's Table, until the sin is repented of and forsaken. Then, if reconciliation be impossible, each must live as in a holy widowhood. And if the innocent seem to be punished by being thus forbidden to marry, the general good must be regarded also. Easiness of divorce, the union of the guilty parties by the State, what is that but a disobedience to God's law, a sapping of public morality, an encouragement to adultery, if not a reward!

274. *Holiness in Single Life.* St. Matt. xix. 10-12.

THE disciples have not yet understood the great mystery of holy Marriage, that it signifies the mystical union between Christ and His Church. Eph. v. 25-32. Neither have they yet learned the glory of holy Virginity. In their view of the union of man and woman they are as yet no wiser than the Pharisees, and they ask for fuller explanation.

As soon as they realize His meaning, they complain of it as too hard. If nothing but the very foulest sin and dishonour will allow the husband to put away his wife, it were better not to marry at all.

But to live holily in the unmarried state is not within the power of all. It is a special gift, the Lord says, to be won, if won at all, by instant prayer, by flight from temptation and resistance of the unclean spirit, by long mortification of the body. Holiness in the unmarried state is thus set before us as the rarer grace, and the higher life. Some have received it by natural constitution, being never tempted from within to fleshly sins, never feeling aught within which even answers to outward temptations; others through bodily injuries have been unfitted for the marriage state; others by their own resolute will, strengthened by grace, have succeeded in subduing all natural inclinations of the flesh. For the Kingdom of Heaven's sake, and that they might serve Christ the more freely, they have voluntarily surrendered the dear and holy delights of home, the wife's companionship, the children's love, the crown and glory of seeing their posterity around them. Prov. xvii. 6. Such an one was St. Paul. He puts that as the higher life in which man and woman being unmarried, care only for the things which

belong to the Lord, how He may be served without any hindrance from earthly anxieties and affections. 1 Cor. vii. 32-34. In face of the trials of this earthly life, of the interests of Christ's Church and the Saviour's claims upon His servants, the Apostle would have Christians, the Priests of God especially and the ministering women, be like himself, unmarried. But, he admits, all cannot receive the saying. Every one has his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. 1 Cor. vii. 7. We may aim too high, and so fall.

And those who for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake pray, and strive after, and win this gift, shall not lose their reward. They, in the souls that they shall win to Christ, shall be the parents of a spiritual family; they shall be able to point to sons and daughters whom the Lord hath given them; their name shall endure to succeeding generations. Isa. lvi. 4, 5; 1 Cor. iv. 14, 15. And these, in the world to come, shall be nearest the Lord of Glory, virgin souls and undefiled, following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, bearing His Father's Name written in their foreheads, and singing the new song before the throne, which none but they can learn, the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. Rev. xiv. 1-5.

Does He then call us *all* to this lonely life, uncheered by the purest and sweetest human affection? No; only those to whom it is given. Some have their vocation to holiness in married life. Let them follow their calling. But if any are called to the single life, let them not neglect the gift that is in them. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

275. *Little Children brought to Jesus.* St. Matt. xix. 13-15; St. Luke xviii. 15-17.

THE married, no less than the single life, has its holiness and its glories, and may no less claim the blessing of the Son of God. By holy marriage God has sanctified the union of man and woman, making them one that they should be the parents of a holy seed, Mal. ii. 15, and that children might be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of His holy Name.

Jewish mothers are now bringing their little ones to Jesus, that He may lay His hands on them with prayer. Many had come seeking Him for the healing of bodily disease or the casting out of devils; some had come for instruction; one at least for forgiveness of sin. These come, with higher faith, as believing that no ill-chance or evil spirit can hurt the little ones on whom Jesus lays His hand. They would have His blessing for their children, as Joseph brought his two sons to Jacob. Gen. xlviii. 12-20.

The disciples, either in their anxiety for their Master's comfort, not wishing Him to be pressed upon by so many, or thinking that His public teaching should not be interrupted for so small a matter, rebuke the parents. Slow to understand His forbearance a little while ago, St. Luke ix. 51-56, they are now equally slow to understand His tenderness. We seldom read of His shewing anger. But now Jesus was much displeased, indignant. St. Mark, with one of his vivid touches, records this displeasure, shewn in the Lord's face and words and gestures, and never to be forgotten by the Apostle at whose dictation he was writing. For this interference between the Lord and those

who thus sought Him was worse than a want of intelligence and faith. It was a hindrance to His work, a contradiction to His invitation to the weary and heavy laden. If any might be permitted to approach Him, if any had a *right* to come, and freely, these little ones stood first, pure as yet from stain of wilful sin. Their parents' faith had brought them. There was no impediment in them. Let them come. Forbid them not. They have a right. And He called the little ones to Him.

For the Kingdom of Heaven was made up of such as these, as He had told them before. St. Matt. xviii. 3. Instead of forbidding the children, they should rather imitate them, follow their innocence, their humility, their trustfulness and lovingness. It is not wisdom, or power, or age, but the pure and gentle and childlike heart which is worthy to enter into His Kingdom. And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them and blessed them; doing more than was asked; not praying for a blessing but giving it, as one having authority.

Who reading this would doubt His Lord's love for the tenderest lamb of the flock? Who, in the pride of his own knowledge and striving, would think of a child as too ignorant, too young, to be brought to Jesus? Yet such there are, not knowing what manner of spirit He is of.

276. *Infant Baptism.* St. Mark x. 13-16.

AMONG the foundations of the Gospel of Christ St. Paul places the doctrine of Baptisms. Heb. vi. 2. Yet even in this Christians unhappily cannot agree, either in their doctrine or in their

practice. There are some who maintain that none are to be baptized until they are of sufficient age and knowledge to make for themselves their public profession of faith and obedience, and have shewn signs that they are really converted to God. These, therefore, condemn the Baptism of Infants.

Far different is the Church's practice. She maintains that the Baptism of young children is in anywise to be retained as most agreeable to the institution of Christ ; and in reading this passage in her Baptismal service, she calls upon the people to observe how our Saviour Christ commanded the children to be brought unto Him ; how He blamed those that would have kept them from Him ; how He declared His goodwill towards them by embracing them in His arms, laying His hands on them and blessing them ; how He speaks even of a worthiness in them, exhorting all men to follow their innocency. These words, by themselves, would seem sufficient to allow, if they did not require, that infants as well as grown men and women should be baptized. Their need is the same ; for all are born in sin, the children of wrath ; and none can enter into the Kingdom of God except he be born of water and the Spirit. They are included in the command, ' Go ye into all the world and teach—make disciples of—all nations, baptizing them.' St. Matt. xxviii. 19. There is no wilful resistance in them to hinder the free entrance and operation of the Holy Ghost. Not a word is said from first to last in the New Testament to shew that Baptism ought to be refused, or ever was refused, to the children of believers. He who shewed mercy to so many sick, who shewed so much love to these little ones in reward of the faith of those who brought them, will He not receive and

bless our little ones now, when we bring them to Him, stedfastly believing the promises which He makes to us in that Sacrament?

But further; all through the Old Testament the Lord required that the Jewish infant should be brought into covenant with Him when eight days old. It was then made one of His chosen nation, His royal Priesthood, His peculiar people. If not so brought to Him it had broken the covenant, Gen. xvii. 12-14. At eight days old the child of Jewish parents could make or break covenant with God! How should that law fail under the new and better covenant? Should the parents, because they were old enough to make deliberate choice and open profession, be admitted from the old covenant to the new, to be born again, to put on Christ, to be made inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven, and their innocent babes, as yet unsoiled by wilful sin, have the door shut in their faces? Must the child of a Christian parent be shut up under the Law, and forbidden to come to Jesus? No—a thousand times no! The promise is to us, and to our children; to them even more than to us. Acts ii. 39. For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

277. *The Rich Young Ruler.* St. Matt. xix. 16-26.

IN each of the first three Gospels this history follows upon that of the little children brought to Jesus. He is now sought by one who would not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, and who, on this account, could not enter therein.

As He departed from blessing the children, a young man, rich and noble, ran up in haste, and, kneeling before Jesus, asked that one greatest question of all, 'Good Teacher, what good thing

shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Did he intend all that this title meant? The Lord asks, in return, searching him, 'Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God. Hast thou faith in Me, then, as the Son of God? or are thy words only those of the pupil to the teacher?' Jesus does not refuse the title. Rather, He claims it in its fullest power. He is not contented to be called good, unless men know that He is the one and only Good.

There is no reply; and the Lord continues: 'The eternal life is thine if thou keep the commandments;' as He had said to the lawyer, 'This do, and thou shalt live. St. Luke x. 28. This seems but the very grammar of religion. Yet after all, is it not here that we all fail? The young ruler seems to have thought that by some one great deed of faith and obedience he might make his salvation sure. He was ready to do almost anything. And so perhaps we have at times felt ready to dare, to do, to suffer anything for Jesus' sake. We may have envied the martyrs their agony and their crown. But He sends us back to simple, everyday duties. And we, by some foul thought, some angry word, some false, ill-natured, self-willed act, soon shew our unworthiness of a higher call. Jerem. xii. 5. He replies that he has kept all these, and from his youth up, amid all the temptations of rank and wealth. The Lord allows that it is so, and looks upon him with eyes of pitying love, love which would draw him if he would be drawn, pity for the weakness which would soon shew itself. The all-searching Eye saw to the very depths. One thing thou lackest, though thou suspectest it not, ere thou canst be perfect; give up to thy neighbour all that thou hast; thou shalt have treasure in Heaven

instead; and come, follow Me. There was the flaw in his character. He could not forsake all and follow Jesus. The cost was too heavy. We see him on the very threshold of the Kingdom, looked on by the Saviour's eyes of love, the way of life and of perfection opened before him; then going away; very sorrowfully, but still going away.

We are not all tried so sharply, not directly called to part with all our possessions, and to embrace a willing poverty. This precept was spoken to him, because the Lord saw into his heart. There was one thing between him and God, his wealth. Could he give it up, and so give his whole will, his heart, himself? Treasure in Heaven depended on his choice. And he chose the perishable riches of this world.

Perhaps, if we only knew it, our eternal life depends upon our sacrificing some one thing to Christ. And perhaps, too, our conscience tells us what it is. But we, foolish that we are, cling to our idol, and go away from Jesus. Yet, even as we go, we are sorrowful. Oh that this sorrow might bring us back to Him, and cast the idol at His feet!

278. *Counsels of Perfection.* St. Matt. xix. 11, 12; 20, 21.

IF thou wilt to be perfect! What did our Lord mean by these words? If keeping the commandments open an entrance into life, what need of any further rule? And what is this being 'perfect'?

These, and other like sayings, are too little considered. Already the Lord had said something which will help us to understand this. When He told the disciples that husband and wife were bound

to each other for life, they reasoned that, in that case, it was better not to marry. What is His reply? That it was not everybody who could live unmarried and without sin; that this required a special grace; that some had done so for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake; and that whosoever was able to receive it, ought to do so. That is, in fact, He counsels those who can keep themselves pure in the unmarried state, to abstain from marriage. Just as He counsels this young man to make himself poor. But He does not say that they will do wrong by marrying; or that this young man will be lost unless he give away his riches. For marriage is a holy estate; riches a talent which may be used to God's glory. *Ecclus. xxxi. 8-11.*

Of Marriage St. Paul writes in the same strain. He wishes that the Christians at Corinth would live like himself, unmarried; because in the single life they would be able to give themselves entirely to serving the Lord. The married life is good, he says. But they who abstain from marriage do better, and are likely to be more blessed. That is his judgment, the judgment of one who has the Spirit of God. It is not meant as a command. *1 Cor. vii. 7-12.*

A third counsel, is Obedience; that is, the giving up of our own will beyond that which is required from all men by the expressed laws of God and their country. Though the Lord does not speak so distinctly of this, yet His own perfect example stands as a counsel. He made Himself obedient to the Law for man's sake, as in His circumcision, which He need not have done. He was subject to Mary and Joseph. He pleased not Himself.

The world, however, is very jealous of these counsels of perfection. It cannot understand the free, generous service of Christ, to the extent of giving

up *all* for Him. But, to compare earthly things with Heavenly, this spirit of doing all that we *can*, and not merely all that we *must*, is necessary in all great, and laborious, and dangerous works of combined effort. Soldiers, for example, must give up the comforts and pleasures of home-life, must submit themselves to much stricter laws than those which the rest of their countrymen submit to. And what are we but Christ's soldiers? Is not the highest Christian life, then, to give up all for Christ's sake, to choose poverty, loneliness, dishonour, that we may the better serve Him who chose these for us? Will real work at home for sick and suffering bodies, for sinful and perishing souls, ever be done until our brothers and sisters can choose poverty, and chastity, and obedience for Jesus' sake. Will real work among the heathen and unconverted ever be done until men are found to go for the work's sake, poor and alone, wherever their Bishop may send them?

This is not required from all. Men may serve Christ, and be saved by Him, in all ranks and conditions, everyone after his special gift. Poverty, chastity, obedience, these are of counsel, not of precept. But he that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

279. *The Rewards of the New Creation.* St. Matt.
xix. 23-30.

THE rich young ruler had not resolution enough to be perfect at this heavy cost. He went away sorrowful. We cannot follow him home, so as to know what became of him. He may have been able, like Joseph of Arimathæa, and other rich men, to learn of Jesus as a true disciple, to be bold in the hour of danger. St. Matt. xxvii. 58. But

from our Lord's remark it is probable that he never returned. At that time for a rich man to become a follower of Jesus meant having no home, and being despised and rejected by all his old friends. To use a proverb—A camel might as easily go through a needle's eye as a rich man enter into the Kingdom of God. The thing was, so to say, an impossibility. St. Mark represents the Lord looking round as drawing His disciples' attention, and then, on their astonishment, softening His first statement, and saying instead, How hardly shall they that *trust in riches* enter into the Kingdom of God! But this is little less terrible. For it implies that those who have riches can hardly help trusting in them. Wisely do we pray the Good Lord to deliver us in the time of our wealth as well as in the time of tribulation, the hour of death, and the Day of Judgment.

With increased astonishment they ask, 'Who then shall be saved?' Again He looks upon them, comforting them now, and reminds them that the grace of God can save all, in spite of the severest temptations.

The call which the rich young ruler refused had been obeyed by the Twelve. They had forsaken all and followed Jesus. The fishing boats and nets, an aged father and the hired servants, the receipt of custom, friends and home,—not much, perhaps, but all they had to leave, they had left. Peter, as spokesman, reminds his Master of this. What shall we have therefore? Jesus promises them a double reward. Even in this time they shall receive all that they have foregone a hundred fold. For their poverty they shall have all, and abound with His riches and fulness. For their lonely life they shall have sons and daughters begotten in the

Gospel. For their lowly obedience they shall be made princes over the Israel of God. And hereafter, in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the Throne of His glory, they shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And this higher glory is not given to them, it seems, because they are Apostles, but because they have forsaken all, and followed Him. They have chosen the higher life, the utter denial of self and all that belongs to self. They have sought, not how cheaply they could be saved, but how much they could give to Him who saved them freely by His grace. Therefore to them, and to those who shall do likewise, shall be given fullest compensation in this life and special glory in the life to come. 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.

By the twelve tribes is meant the full and complete body of the glorified Church of the Redeemed; Rev. vii. 4; xxi. 12; by the Regeneration that blessed time when He that sitteth on the Throne will have made all things new. Rev. xxi. 5.

What are we giving up for Christ? We ought to be ready to give up *everything*. But have we really given up anything—even one doubtful pleasure, even one single sin?

280. *The Labourers in the Vineyard.* St. Matt. xx. 1-16.

MANY are the difficulties in this parable, many and widely different the interpretations. Some writers read in it the history of God's calls to the world at various periods. Others read in it His calls to men at the different periods of their lives. Others take it as a warning and a prophecy to the Jews, who, having so long served God as His chosen

people, would murmur, like the elder brother of the Prodigal Son, when they saw the Gentiles made their equals in His Kingdom. Each of these interpretations will fit in with the words of the Divine Speaker. Yet each seems to be beside and apart from His meaning, and fails to harmonise with the circumstances under which the parable was spoken.

The Apostles had observed their Master's answers to the young ruler. *They* had already done what He now enjoined both for salvation and for perfection. They had forsaken all and followed Him. What will be their compensation? they ask. He assures them that all who have made such like sacrifices for His sake shall receive a full reward. Nevertheless, there is a sort of pride in their thus comparing themselves with the young ruler, a sort of confidence and claim upon the Lord, as if He was their debtor for so much good work. Therefore He gives them the caution that the first and last may change places; because the Kingdom of Heaven is like a vineyard for which the householder went out to hire labourers; God calls whom He will, calls them when He will, rewards them as He will. It is not man that chooses God, but God that chooses man, St. John xv. 16; and His reward is not wages earned but grace freely bestowed. In the parable the first called are hired by special agreement—a Roman penny for the day's work, some eightpence of our money, and more than field-labourers earned in England two hundred years ago. Those hired at the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours make no agreement. They trust their employer to give them what is right. So far, there is more of faith and respect shewn by them than by the first.

The day's work ended, the wages are paid; a

penny to the last, the same to the earliest called. Upon this a murmur arises from the men who have borne the twelve hours' toil and heat. They grudge the generosity which the master of the vineyard has shewn to those late comers, claiming for themselves a higher payment than they had agreed upon. So it was in the Church, the vineyard of God's work and God's grace. He called in Jew first, then Gentile; Apostle first, then a more humble brother; one man in the morning, another in the eventide of life. The workers ought to rejoice; the latest called that He so plenteously rewards their brief toil; the first called that their brethren have been brought in and so rewarded, and that they themselves are thought worthy of their pay. Otherwise, if the grudging spirit arise, many of the first shall be last, many of the called will not be chosen.

The great fault condemned is their endeavour to establish their own righteousness, and their forgetfulness of God's mercy and sovereign rights. Rom. x. 3; xi. 6. This was the fault of the Jews. It might be the fault of the Apostles. Let the Christian disciple take heed too, lest his day's work end in a murmur against his Master.

281. *The Calling and the Election.* St. Matt.
.xix. 30; xx. 16.

THIS parable, while its first purpose appears to be intended for the Apostles chiefly, has its lessons for all time. Many are called—there is its encouragement; few are chosen—there is its warning. The rich young ruler was among the called. With an honest and good heart he had heard the word of Moses, had kept it and brought forth fruit with patience. He kneels at the feet of Jesus, asking

what he shall do to be saved ; Jesus looks upon him with love, shews him the way of salvation, invites him into the way of perfection, calls him to be follower and friend. Yet the love of riches choked the Word in his heart, so that it became unfruitful. Sorrowfully he turns away. He is not chosen.

The same Lord calls us, calls all to whom the Word of His salvation comes. We who were born of Christian parents, baptized in our infancy, instructed in our childhood, were called in the morning of our day. Have we obeyed that call ? Have we gone to work, are we still working, in His vineyard ? It should be a joy to us that we are permitted for Him to keep ourselves pure and overcome the wicked one, to bear the burden and heat of the day, to see our brethren coming in to help us, and at eventide to rejoice, sower and reaper together, in the finished work, the exceeding great reward. St. John iv. 36.

Others come in at the different hours of the day, heathen, home-heathen, as well as foreigners, who have never before heard the Name of Jesus ; one must almost add, Christian-heathen, who have heard His Name only to profane and forget it. His mercy extends far beyond the calling of the parable. True, He finds many standing idle, because no man has hired them. But He also finds many who have been hired, and have said, ' I go not.' Yet He has called them again, drawing them, so that they afterwards repented and went. St. Matt. xxi. 29. He finds some even working to His hurt. Still He goes again and again, and calls them, up to the eleventh hour.

There is His encouragement, that, if the sinner obeys the call even at the eleventh hour, he may yet be accepted and rewarded.

Nevertheless, do not delay when thou hearest His call. To-day, this hour, if thou shalt hear His voice, harden not thy heart. *Now* is the accepted time. He may not call thee again. If He has once called thee and thou hast turned away, thou canst not say, 'No man hath hired me;' thou canst not expect Him to seek thee and call thee again. Still less hast thou a right to look for a full reward.

Yet, so great is His goodness, He does not cease calling. He calls this day, this hour. It is not too late. Harken, and go. For this call of to-day may be thine eleventh hour. The night cometh when no man can work.

And for reward, He gives as He will. Be not jealous, therefore. Rather rejoice in the great number of the redeemed, and in the glory of their joy. For by His mercy only is it, if at all, that we, once standing idle, were called; that we, being called, may make our calling and election sure. 2 St. Pet. i. 10.

282. *The Passion again foretold.* St. Mark x.
32-34.

THE Master and His disciples are now daily drawing nearer the scene of His suffering. They have heard His purpose, but understand it not, in spite of His many references to it before the multitude, His more distinct intimations to themselves. He has foreseen it always: from His youth up His own eternal purpose and choice has stood clear before His eyes in the horizon of His three-and-thirty years; the Cross is already in His heart. And He has set His face like a flint, working towards it, that at the time and in the way appointed, He may

give Himself to be the Sacrifice for sin. They may loiter on the way. He went before them !

Went before them, as one who had an all-important task, and was grievously straitened until it were accomplished ; before them, as an all-perfect example that they might follow His steps ; before them, as hastening their laggard footsteps ; before them, as the great Captain of Salvation leading His soldiers to the strife.

And they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. It is St. Mark again who gives this short, yet most touching, mention of the Lord's action, and of its effect upon the disciples. We see Him, filled with the one thought, going before them, alone, silent, solemn, awful in the stern majesty of the pale face and forward-looking eyes. We see them, at first busy in their own little matters, unconscious that they are left behind,—talking, perhaps, over the promised reward of His kingdom, the thrones of judgment which are to be theirs, each eager for the first place—then hurrying on after Him as though to ask, ' Why this haste ? ' checked and silenced before they can put their question ; amazed ; then following, with fear added to amazement.

He takes them apart, and tells them what He had told them four times before, but now with greater distinctness. They are going up to Jerusalem that the Scriptures concerning Him may be fulfilled in all things. First, the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the Chief Priests and the Scribes, who shall condemn Him to death as an offender against their law. But it is not by a Jewish punishment that He shall die. They shall deliver Him over to the Gentiles, to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. All manner of insult and dishonour

shall be inflicted on Him, cruel mockings and scourgings, the buffetings and spitting in the face. This done, the Romans shall condemn Him to death, on a new charge of sedition and rebellion; and by a Gentile punishment He shall die—even the death of the Cross. It is a clear prophecy, distinct in its particulars; the terrible steps traced out one by one, that the disciples, seeing it fulfilled in His Passion and Death, may look in faith for the glorious victory of His Resurrection.

Still the veil is on their hearts. They understood not. Was He, their Master, their King, after all His words and works of power, His promises of glory to them as well as to Himself, to die like a felon in torture and dishonour? ‘That be far from Thee, Lord!’ was Peter’s indignant exclamation when the Passion was first mentioned. Rebuked so sternly then, he is silent now. So are they all. They cannot realise it. His words are, for to-day, as though they had never been spoken.

283. *The Request of James and John.* St. Matt.
xx. 20-28.

SUFFERING and death they cannot understand for Him. While their Master is going before them to the Cross, they have only been thinking of the thrones which He has promised them, each eager to be first. Such is the heart even of the disciples, of the disciples whom Jesus loved; loving themselves first and seeking their own honour. We are all willing enough to reign with Jesus. We are too much occupied to sympathise with Him in the pains and sorrows by which He purchases our salvation. St. Luke ix. 43-46.

A petition is now made to Him by the sons of

Zebedee, James and John, through their mother, Salome. Kneeling before Him, they ask for the thrones on His right hand and on His left, the first places in His glory. These two with Peter had been nearest to Him, so far; spectators of His greatest miracle, and soon afterwards of His glory on the Holy Mount. St. Luke viii. 51; ix. 28. His favour, perhaps, had emboldened them to aim at the highest honours for themselves. For spiritual favours, unless received in humility, prove temptations to all. But, by His favour again, this zeal and this ambition shall turn into a better channel, purified by suffering.

They know not what they ask. They who would reign in His Heavenly Kingdom must first pass through much tribulation. Rev. vii. 14. Are they strong enough to partake of the double sacrament of union with Him, to drink His bitter Cup of suffering, to be buried into the Baptism of a martyr's death? Boldly they answer, and at once, 'We can;' possibly without considering all that His words imply.

He accepts their answer and confirms it. So far they shall be with Him. And so far they were; John drinking through a long life the cup of suffering for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Rev. i. 9. James baptized by his own blood into the martyr's death, the first of the twelve. Acts xii. 2. But of the thrones for which they asked, He told them that they were not His to give, except to those for whom they were prepared by His Father. His they were to give; for to Jesus all things have been delivered by His Father, St. Matt. xi. 27; 2 Tim. iv. 8; yet not by partial preference. But they may sit on His right hand and His left hand in suffering. What that was their mother

learned as she stood, a few weeks later, beneath the Cross of Jesus.

The other Apostles, hearing it, were much displeased; though all had before disputed who should be the greatest, each eager for himself, each envious of his brother. Their Lord therefore, calling them round Him, points out that this strife for the highest place is but an imitation of Gentile pride; that the true glory of His disciples is humility, and the imitation of the Son of Man, who came not to be served, but to be a servant, and to give His life a ransom for many.

So He brings their thoughts back from the glory about which they were striving to the Cross of suffering on which He was so soon to die.

284. *The Ransom for many.* St. Matt. xx. 28.

REBUKING the Twelve for their craving after the first places, the Lord points them to His own example. They have confessed Him to be true Son of the living God. So, indeed, He is. But in His lowliness, He lays aside His highest titles. He has come from His glory with the Father, to be a son of man, to be the servant of all, to be hungry and thirsty, faint and weary; even to wash the disciples' feet.

He does not stop there. He will become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross; Phil. ii. 7, 8; giving His life freely a ransom for the world.

To this greatest work of His, a work of lowest humility yet of highest power, the sacrifices of the Law had pointed. Men by sin had become enemies of God, and were lying afar off. Therefore there needed a Mediator who should make *reconciliation*,

drawing the separated parties once more together, declaring the love of the Father, winning back the love of the sinner. Men by sin had broken God's law, and lay under His wrath and condemnation. Therefore there needed some Righteous one who should make *satisfaction* to the Divine justice, propitiating, or turning away, the Divine wrath; and blotting out the sentence that was against us. Mankind were sold under sin, slaves, delivered up to punishment. Therefore there needed some Rich one who should pay their *ransom*, buying them off at a price, purchasing for them the freedom and glory of everlasting life.

All this Jesus, the Son of God, has done for them with His own Blood. He is our *Reconciliation*, having made peace between God and man by the Blood of His Cross, Eph. ii. 16; our *Satisfaction*, having paid the debt of the Divine Justice, 1 St. Pet. ii. 24; our *Propitiation*, having turned away from us the Divine Anger, Rom. iii. 25; our *Ransom*, having given His life a ransom for all. 1 Tim. ii. 6. This is the doctrine of the Atonement—that Jesus suffered death upon the Cross for our Redemption, or Ransom, paying His life a price for us; and that He there made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.

This most comforting and precious doctrine is not hard to understand as it is taught to us in the Scriptures and the Prayer-book. Some have wrapped it up in so many words and such long explanations, that simple minds have only been puzzled. The fewer words for great truths, the better. 'Christ died for our sins.' So St. Paul puts the doctrine. 1 Cor. xv. 3. Then he turns the light of the ancient Sacrifices, and Types, and Scriptures upon the Cross,

and lets us see, in the Death of the Son of God, an infinite power working with the Father for us, taking away our sin, paying our debt, delivering us from punishment, justifying us, sanctifying us, freeing us from the slavery of the devil, reconciling us with the Father, enriching us with the shedding abroad of His Love into our hearts, strengthening us, bringing us grace, giving us life, eternal life, life most abundantly.

How His Death won all this for us, is not easily explained. Enough that it has been done so. We believe it. And believing, we have peace with God. Rom. v. 1-11.

285. *Differences and Contradictions.* St. Matt.
xx. 29-34.

IN the accounts of this miracle given by three Evangelists, we find differences not easily reconciled. All agree in placing it in the last journey to Jerusalem, and near Jericho. All agree in the main particulars of a blind beggar sitting by the roadside, hearing the tramp of the multitude, asking who was passing, and on being told, addressing Jesus as the Son of David, with a cry for mercy. All shew us the multitude rebuking a blind man for his noisy cries, the Lord standing still, calling for the blind man, asking him what he wanted, and granting the request in reward for his faith. But, when the facts are told by all in almost the same words, we find that St. Matthew represents the miracle as taking place on the Lord's departure from Jericho, and the cure of two blind men. St. Luke contradicts both these statements; for he says that one blind man only, cured on the road to Jericho. St. Mark agrees with St.

Matthew in the *place* of the miracle, with St. Luke in the *number* of the men cured. And this is not the only matter in Scripture in which we find more or less important differences. In the behaviour of the two thieves crucified with Jesus, in the manner of Judas' death, in the events immediately succeeding upon the Lord's resurrection, in some parables and in other miracles, we find the accounts of the Evangelists not altogether corresponding. And unbelieving and unstable souls ask profanely what credit is to be given to writers who cannot agree in their story.

Now, first of all, these differences have, at any rate, this value; they prove beyond all question that the writers did not copy idly from each other, that they drew from independent sources. And thus their integrity is placed beyond all doubt.

Next, it is to be remembered that they do not profess to tell every single circumstance, only such as seem to them of importance; that they omit some things; that they put together words which were spoken, and actions which were done, at different times and places; and, again, that each follows his own order and arrangement. Judge the holy Gospels as men would judge any human testimony upon important matters. If the same story is told word for word by many witnesses, we suspect them of having agreed among themselves what to tell, and what to withhold; we doubt their honesty. But if they agree in all the main facts we are not surprised at a few little differences in their tale. We take it for granted that these differences might all be explained.

Now with respect to this miracle. It is quite likely that the blind Bar-Timæus was begging by the roadside when Jesus drew near to Jericho, as

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St. Luke says; that he enquired who was passing by with so many followers; that thereupon he made his cry without obtaining the restoration of his sight, yet with a full expectation of receiving it shortly; that on the following day, with a companion afflicted like himself, he put himself in Jesus' way, on His departure from Jericho, and then received his sight. There is no difficulty in the fact that in St. Matthew's Gospel two blind men are spoken of, and one only in the others. Bar-Timæus and his father were evidently well known; and it is the mercy and power displayed in the miracle, not the number of persons cured, which we are concerned to know. The man who treats Scripture in this fault-finding and unbelieving spirit may ask more questions in five minutes than the wisest scholar could answer in a lifetime. But deal with God's Word honestly, and lovingly. With honest enquiry and liberal interpretation its difficulties will soon cease to vex us. The Word of God standeth sure.

286. *Blind Bar-Timæus.* St. Mark x. 46-52.

BLIND, and begging his daily bread by the roadside! It seems the very depth of wretchedness, and ignorance, and misery. It is true that, in that country and in those times, the condition of the beggar was not so miserable or disgraceful as it is with us. Even now, in countries where the law makes no provision for the afflicted and infirm, especially in the far East, the beggar is never molested; the city gates and the church steps are thronged with the miserable, the aged, and the idle. Yet here, as there, the blind beggar would seldom be passed without a look of pity, a small gift, and

a grateful uplifting of the heart to Him who has preserved to us the precious sense of sight.

Blind and a beggar! How should such an one come to know the name, and goodness, and power of Jesus of Nazareth? How get near Him? How make his wants known? However, he has heard the name and the character of Jesus, aye, so as to know Him and to address Him by a higher title than Scribes and Pharisees have ever used. He has perhaps heard that Jesus was coming near to Jericho, and has now put himself by the roadside, watchful for His coming. Day after day, hour after hour, he is listening for the footsteps; and at the sound of any unusual multitude he would ask who this was, hoping that the Great Healer was approaching.

At last He comes. They tell him that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. Passeth by! Then there is no time to lose. He cries,—and oh! mark the clearness of his knowledge, the boldness of his faith—‘Jesus, Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ This title of ‘Lord,’ might have been no more than the respectful salutation of any petitioner. But ‘Son of David’ is the title of the Christ. St. Matt. xxi. 9; xxii. 42. Bar-Timæus and his companion must have known how Jesus had fulfilled ancient prophecies in giving sight to the blind. Isa. xxxv. 5. Therefore they acknowledge Him as Messiah.

Surely the crowd will take up his cry, will bring the blind man to Jesus. No; un pitying that they are, they bid him hold his peace. Another minute and his opportunity will be gone, perhaps for ever. He will not be silent. In his agony he cries the more a great deal, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ He is heard now. Or rather he was heard

Nevertheless, do not delay when thou hearest His call. To-day, this hour, if thou shalt hear His voice, harden not thy heart. *Now* is the accepted time. He may not call thee again. If He has once called thee and thou hast turned away, thou canst not say, 'No man hath hired me;' thou canst not expect Him to seek thee and call thee again. Still less hast thou a right to look for a full reward.

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the sin of dishonesty cannot be forgiven until the stolen property is restored to its rightful owner.

Is not this a good touchstone for our repentance? We have sinned. Now our eyes are opened. We are very sorry. We will not so offend again. Yes; but what of the credit and the gain which our sin has brought us? It is with us, it stands by us, our sin in a bodily form, so to speak, to witness against us; the burden of it is intolerable. Away with it! Restore it to the rightful owner. Restore double, fourfold; not only to make amends in full measure, but to punish thyself. Let thy repentance work a *clearing of thyself*, and zeal, and revenge upon thyself. So chastening thyself, thou shalt not be judged of the Lord. 1 Cor. xi. 31.

This only is a true repentance, a true forsaking of the sin. But if thou wilt keep the unjust gain, thy sorrow is nothing. Thou art keeping thy sin.

289. *The Pounds.* St. Luke xix. 11-28.

SEEING Jesus pressing forward so hastily to Jerusalem, the disciples, and others with them, imagined that He would at once overthrow the Roman government, and take to Himself the kingly power. He therefore speaks to them this parable of the pounds, that they may be prepared for His leaving the world and going to the Father.

A certain nobleman went away into a far country to receive from the supreme government the royal authority. This is what Herod had done. At first he was a governor with very limited authority. Afterwards, going to Rome, he was sent back to be king. Even so the Son of Abraham and of David would go to His Father to receive His great power and to reign. Rev. xi. 15.

And, like an earthly prince at such a time, He would give His servants their charge, putting them in trust with the common powers and privileges bestowed equally upon all Christians. For in this parable, observe, all receive the same. But there is another party in the city, ill-disposed towards Him; and these send an embassy against Him opposing His appointment. They will not have this man for their king. St. John xix. 15.

At last came the return, and the reckoning. The servants give in their account; the first saying, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds;' 'Thy pound'—claiming no credit to himself; even as St. Paul writes, 'Yet not I, but the grace of God that is with me.' 1 Cor. xv. 10. To him the king, distributing the offices and honours of His newly received kingdom, gives the double reward of praise and power. Faithful over a very little—one small piece of gold—the servant has proved himself worthy of far greater things. He shall have authority over ten cities. The servant whose pound had gained five pounds is rewarded in the same proportion; he is made ruler over five cities.

Then came another, in perfect assurance that he too shall be rewarded. Knowing, and fearing, His Lord's stern character, he dared not risk the losing his money in trade. He has kept it safe; there it is! Safe! yes, as a dead thing, St. John xi. 44, wrapped in a napkin. And what is the judgment upon him? Labour and zeal, the spending and being spent, not the keeping of our life but the losing of it rather for His sake, is what Christ demands. His pound is taken from him to be given to the faithful servant who hath gained ten pounds; while the bystanders wonder, not knowing that unto everyone which hath shall more be given. Thus

the king on his return rewards and judges his servants. Then follows the punishment of his enemies. So shall it be in the end of the world.

And where are we? Comforting ourselves that we are servants and not enemies? looking at our pound so carefully put by, confident of acceptance when we shall give it back to Him safe? But that will not be enough. That will only earn for us the title of wicked servant. And look again. Hast thou done even so much? Hast thou kept that pound to give it back? Hast thou not wasted it rather? How then wilt thou meet Him with empty hands?

And when He had thus spoken, He went before them again, as impatient, going up to Jerusalem.

290. *Degrees of Glory in the Saints' Reward.*

St. Luke xix. 16-19.

SINNERS though we are all, most unworthy of mercy, yet our Heavenly Father deals out that mercy to us freely, and most abundantly. So lovingly does He invite us, so richly does He promise, that He often drops the word 'mercy,' and speaks of 'reward,' as if we were faithful, and wise, and profitable servants. It is a mark of our faith that we have respect unto the recompense of the reward; Heb. xi. 26; that we resist temptation and labour diligently, believing not only that our sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake, but that he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully; 2 Cor. ix. 6; and that the Lord will reward every man according to the work which he has done, even to a full reward, and an abundant entrance into His everlasting Kingdom. 2 St. Peter. i. 11.

With this glorious expectation before us, we look for different degrees of glory in the life eternal. Those who have most perfectly served their Lord will stand foremost and nearest to His Throne, rulers of highest rank in His Kingdom. This indeed He promised to the Apostles, that they should sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. St. Matt. xix. 28. In the parables of the pounds and of the talents, we see the faithful servants rulers over ten cities and five, rulers over many things. The many mansions in His Father's House seem to tell not only of number but of difference. And St. Paul, in that glorious chapter which the Church reads for the consolation of the Christian mourner, teaches us that, as there are unequal glories of sun, moon, and stars, so also is it in the Resurrection of the dead ; implying that, as among the heavenly lights some are more glorious than others, even so the glorified bodies of the Saints will shine, some with brighter, some with lesser, radiancy of glory. Dan. xii. 3.

This follows, again, from the many awful words spoken by our Lord concerning the punishments of the lost. The severer judgment falls upon those whose opportunities were greatest, the sharper punishment upon the servant who knew his master's will and did it not. St. Matt. x. 15 ; St. Luke xii. 47, 48. And so the law of the future Life will be this,—the greater glory for those who have served their Lord most perfectly, the severer punishment for those who have most obstinately sinned.

Do we think sufficiently of the good things which the Lord has prepared for them that love Him, the robe of immortality, the crown of righteousness, the waking up after His likeness, the sitting near Him on His Throne ! I fear not. No wonder then that

our hearts sometimes fail us in the midst of temptations and adversities. Let us refresh our drooping spirits with the contemplation and the desire of the promised reward. In this life that work is begun by us which we may lay up as treasure in Heaven. In this life that work is begun in us which more and more changes us into the likeness of Christ and makes us meet for the inheritance of the Saints in light. Every degree of grace to which we advance here, shall raise us to a degree higher in the future glory. Every opportunity, every moment is precious. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye always *abounding* in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Cor. xv. 58.

PART XI.

JESUS AT BETHANY.

291. *The Purification for the Passover.* St. John
xi. 55.

THE Lord Jesus had now for some weeks steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. The purpose of His journey had made itself understood by the Samaritans, who on that account refused to receive Him into their village. St. Luke ix. 53. The disciples too had marked His holy impatience, as He went before them. It amazed them and frightened them. St. Mark x. 32. This same eagerness continues as He approaches the holy city. St. Luke xix. 28. It is still Jesus *going before them*, compelled by the stern necessity of His unspeakable love for men, which presses Him and goads Him onward, as it were, until He has accomplished His Baptism of self-devotion unto death.

The Passover of the Jews was nigh at hand; the yearly commemoration of their salvation from the destroying Angel, their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. But this was to be in a stricter sense the Passover, chief among all Passovers; standing alone indeed as the one Passover, the reality, of which every yearly Passover was but a figure, seeing that the true Paschal Lamb was now to be slain. This was indeed the Passover of the

Jews; of those who were Jews inwardly, the true seed of Abraham, the spiritual Israel of God; of those who, believing in Christ their Passover, and sprinkled with His Blood in their Baptism, should feed upon Him in His Holy Feast. Jesus went up to Jerusalem therefore, not only to offer and to eat a Passover, but to give Himself as *the* Passover; to be at the same time Priest, and Sacrifice, and Feast.

Already, though it wanted some days to the offering of the sacrifice, many had gone up to Jerusalem for the purpose of purifying themselves. For none were permitted to eat at that holy table while they were labouring under any uncleanness. Numb. ix. 6-11. Therefore certain cleansing ceremonies, sacrifices, and sprinklings of blood, washings and fastings and prayers, were required, lest any, eating unworthily, should eat and drink condemnation to himself. 2 Chron. xxix. ; xxx. 15-19. What a lesson for us Christians that we should cleanse our hearts before eating of that Bread and drinking of that Cup which are so infinitely more than the Passover of the Jews! For theirs was only a sign and figure of the True. What great need, then, to thee, O Christian, of careful preparation, of purification of thy inward parts by self-examination, and repentance, and confession of thy sins, and stedfast purpose to lead a new life! If a week's purification was none too long for the Jew, before he could dare to eat of the type, is any time too long for thee, any care too great, any penitence too humble, before thou drawest near the Altar of thy God, there to 'receive into thine own possession the everlasting verity, our Saviour Jesus Christ, His Body which was once broken, His Blood which was shed, for the remission of thy sins?' [*Homily on the Resurrection.*]

Therefore, let us take heed to purify ourselves. And while we do so, let us with a lowly, penitent heart, offer Hezekiah's prayer for ourselves and for our brethren, that the good Lord will pardon all who have come with a true heart, in case their preparation in any way falls short. 2 Chron. xxx. 18-20.

292. *The Expectation at Jerusalem.* St. John
xi. 55-57.

IT was not now with Jesus as at that Passover three years before, when He went up unknown, the Carpenter of Nazareth, accompanied by a few humble followers. Now with men of all parts His name was a familiar word. Those who went up to Jerusalem from the country looked for Him, and not finding Him, enquired concerning Him of each other. They no longer thought of Him as the Carpenter. They had heard His teaching, they had seen His miracles, in all the cities of Galilee and Samaria and Judæa. In almost every large crowd there would be some whom He had taught and healed. Thus, from curiosity, or hope, or gratitude, all would seek for Him; or from that worse motive which led the Pharisees to desire His death, a bitter jealousy and hate. The raising of Lazarus had confirmed the fears and enmities of the ruling powers in the Jewish Church. As soon as they heard of it they had held their Council, and on the High Priest's demand had passed a vote resolving upon His death. St. John xi. 45-54. It was as fleeing from their fury that Jesus first went to Ephraim, where He continued some little time with His disciples, and then made His last journey to Galilee and back southwards, timing His journey so as to arrive in Jerusalem when His hour was

come. But the sentence was registered against Him, and the Rulers only waited for His return, and for a favourable opportunity of putting it in force. Their instructions were already issued that any man who knew where Jesus was should give information that they might take Him.

There were therefore two great parties in the Holy City; the one, the visitors from Galilee and Samaria and the country of Judæa, looking for Jesus with the expectation that the Kingdom of God should immediately be manifested, with curiosity at least, if not with goodwill, affection, and respect; the other, more than half persuaded that He was an impostor and blasphemer, fully convinced that He would, if not checked, bring down upon them the vengeance of the Roman power. The language of the former was, 'What think ye—that He will not come up to the Feast?' Of the latter, 'We must find Him and arrest Him.'

It is hardly too much therefore to say that now Jesus had made Himself thoroughly known, in His teaching, in His miracles, in his claims to be the founder of a Kingdom. All men sought for Him. He would have many followers and many enemies. It would depend upon Himself, His wisdom and power, whether the week would end in a universal welcome or rejection. He could hardly delay much longer. His claims must be put to their final proof. He must succeed or fall.

And so His enemies, even while they purified themselves for the Passover, were, as God witnessed against them by Isaiah, filling their hands with blood. Isa. i. 10-15. Is there no warning here for us, lest we, seeking Him with unbelieving and unloving hearts, should find Him at our Feast only to our own great loss; and beginning with words of

welcome and of praise, end by being guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord ?

293. *The Anointing at Bethany.* St. John xii. 1-3;
St. Mark xiv. 4-9

FROM the house of Zacchæus Jesus proceeds towards Jerusalem, making no stoppage that we hear of until His arrival at Bethany, six days before the Passover, the evening of the Sabbath day. There the house of His dear friends, Martha and her sister and Lazarus, would ever be open to Him. There we may suppose Him a more than ever beloved and honoured guest. And in the house of Simon, now cured of leprosy—probably by Jesus—yet still known as Simon the leper, by reason of his long suffering under that terrible disease, they make Him a supper. Martha is serving; Lazarus takes his place with the others at the table—Lazarus who had been among the dead, and was on that account an object of curiosity to the people, of suspicion and hatred to the Rulers.

And where is Mary, she who had sat at His feet listening to His words, whom Martha blamed for idleness and selfishness, whom Jesus commended as having chosen that good part which should not be taken away from her? St. Luke x. 38-42. Where is Mary? As then, leaving her sister to serve; as then, doing Him honour in her own way. At a great cost, three hundred pence, a labouring man's wages for a whole year, she had purchased an alabaster box or flask of oil of spikenard. This was one of the costliest of Eastern perfumes, cultivated with the utmost care, and reserved for the guests of the rich. Cant. iv. 12, 13; i. 12. Hardly to be obtained pure, it would even then be doled out

grudgingly as precious exceedingly. See now the extravagance of Mary's gift. Not drop by drop, not reserving for others or for herself, but *all* for Him; the flask is crushed, its whole contents poured out upon His feet and head. The house is filled with the sweet smell of the oil. And then, with utter lowliness, as scarce worthy to touch Him, she wipes His feet with her hair. The glory of the gift is enhanced in this, that she, lavishing so much upon Him whom her soul loved, yet claims nothing in return, save to prostrate herself at His feet, as though unworthy to stand before Him.

Once before Jesus had been anointed, much in the same way, and by a woman. Then it was a woman that was a sinner. Now it was Mary of Bethany. Then, as now, the bystanders found fault. Then they murmured that He suffered Himself to be touched by the sinful woman. Now that they have not that ground of offence, they murmur at the extravagance of the gift. All broken and poured away! Why, it might have been sold for the benefit of the poor. Judas was first in the outcry. Yet not for the sake of the poor really, but for his own guilty covetousness. Waste! they called it, this giving to Jesus. And Waste! men call it, the giving to Jesus now in the beauty of His Sanctuary, and the glory of His worship. Waste! even while they themselves dwell in luxury and show, and all self-indulgent extravagance. Nothing is too good for themselves. Anything is good enough for Christ. Yet they plead the cause of the poor, they say. Is it so, truly? Are the poor then forgotten where the House of God is glorious? Nay, rather, is it not there especially that the poor are welcomed, as brothers, to the House of the One Father, the One Lord, of all? And are not hardness to the poor

and grudgingness towards God, only two sides of the same sin ?

294. *The Indignation of Judas.* St. Mark
xiv. 4-9.

THERE were certain to whom Mary's loving and uncalculating generosity gave deep offence. On the colder principles of reasoning there was something to be urged from their side. The ointment might certainly have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor. Doubtless, if the starving poor had been crying at the gate for bread, and there were no other means of satisfying their hunger, Jesus would have diverted this offering from Himself to them. The High Priest, Ahimelech, was not blamed, neither was David, the one giving, the other taking, the Shew-bread for the saving of life. 1 Sam. xxi. 1-6. In times of bitter famine the Church has sold even the sacred vessels from the Altar rather than suffer her children to starve. Was this wrong then ? No. But the cases are not the same. The world has enough for Christ, and for His poor, and for itself too. But it cries, 'I give not to Christ, lest the poor suffer;' while its real motto is, 'I give not to the poor, lest I myself have a luxury the less.' And they murmured against her, Judas especially. What his motive was the Holy Spirit tells us.

Have we not here the key to the heart of Judas ? How was it that one so long with the Son of God, so close to Him, possessing the Spirit of God in himself so as to teach and to work miracles, should have ended in betrayal of his Lord, in impenitent, hopeless suicide ? Because while his Lord had given him everything, he grudged to his Lord. He had

never, all this time, learned to love Jesus, or to honour Him. He looked to his Master's greatness, to the expected Kingdom, only as a means to his own advantage in position and wealth.

The all-seeing Lord, who alone can rightly measure all human actions, justifies His loving and humble servant. Let her alone. It is a good work. She had understood, what they had not, that He was to be with them only a little while; that He was indeed to die, and that soon; when He went into a far country to take unto Himself His Kingdom, St. Luke xix. 12, she could no more minister to Him of her substance. If any will give to the poor, they still have their opportunities. Let them give, and freely. She hath again chosen a good part. She hath done what she could.

Is not this the highest praise alike for rich and poor? To have done well, to the utmost of our power, were it only in a little thing, would render our life not in vain before God. Oh that we might reach unto this! that we might justly earn this praise at the end of life—that we had done what we could!

Her action, wrought in love, in faith, in dim understanding of what so soon shall be, gives Him occasion to speak more plainly. They will not have Him always. This anointing is for His burial.

And she shall have her reward; a place in the records of the Church; her name coupled in the Gospel with the name of Jesus; He is the Christ, anointed from Heaven by the Spirit of God, anointed on earth by Mary of Bethany.

295. *Palm Sunday. The Morning at Bethany.*
St. John xii. 9-11.

MOST of those travelling to the Passover with Jesus and His disciples would push on at once to Jerusalem, while He stopped at Bethany. There they would soon hear the questioning and surmises whether or no He would come to the Feast, they would soon become acquainted with the instructions issued by the Chief Priests. St. John xi. 56, 57. Thus it would be known on that same Sabbath evening where He was. And on the morrow much people of the Jews went out from Jerusalem to Bethany, which lay but two miles eastward, over the Mount of Olives. They had a double object in view: first to see Jesus Himself, then Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. With what awe would they gaze at the latter, the man whose spirit had passed four days among the Saints at rest, there seeing things which man's heart cannot imagine, hearing words which are not lawful for man to utter, partaker in the worship which the souls of the righteous in their joy and felicity pay from under the golden Altar to the Lord God Almighty.

Ancient tradition tells us that, as was likely, the lips of Lazarus were sealed concerning all these things. It tells us, also, that he never smiled after his return to dwell again in the flesh.

Many seeing him silent and self-contained in his awful memories, doubted not of the tale that was told concerning him, that he had been dead and was alive again; and, looking from the once dead to Him who had given life, they believed on Jesus.

Meanwhile, the Rulers in Jerusalem were watching the course of events with gradually increasing

apprehension. The raising of Lazarus was no miracle done in a corner. Yet perhaps the fame of it might blow over, and its effect upon the minds of the people pass off when Jesus was put out of the way. Therefore the Pharisees had determined upon His death. But Jesus is once more at Bethany, drawing the multitudes to look at Lazarus, and to believe in His miracles and His doctrines. All that the Pharisees feared is coming to pass. It is Pass-over-time, and the people will flock to Bethany by thousands. There is no help for it. Lazarus must die too.

And how did He view this, He who knew all things, the faith of the many believers, the darker plottings of the rulers? With His wonted calm resolution; suffering all that pain which the expectation of coming ill works in the human heart, yet stedfastly purposed, and eager, to fulfil His Father's law.

So began the first day of the week, soon to become the Lord's day. The Pharisees need not have feared that Jesus would hide Himself. The Son of David, the King of Israel, will come this very day into His own City and Temple, shewing Himself for one brief hour in something of the triumph which is rightly His.

296. *The Ride from Bethany.* St. Matt. xxi. 1-7.

THE morning was passed, so we understand it, in Bethany, among the many who came out to see Jesus and Lazarus, and to speak with them and with each other of that great miracle. Some of these would have returned by midday; and their report and their evident faith certainly increased the feeling in His favour. The multitudes in Jerusalem, gathered from all parts, were more and more

convinced that the Kingdom of God would immediately appear; and that this Jesus of Nazareth was indeed, as the blind beggar at Jericho had addressed Him, really the Son of David, the King of Israel. They prepare, therefore, to go forth and bring Him into the City of David, with all the welcome due to a King. St. John xii. 12, 13, 17, 18.

While the multitudes are on their way from Jerusalem, Jesus has gone forth from Bethany. And just before reaching Bethphage and the Mount of Olives, He sends two of His disciples into the village. There He tells them they will find an ass tied, with her colt, whereon never man sat. These, or it may be the colt only, they are to bring to Him. If the owners make objection, this shall be sufficient answer—'The Lord hath need of them.' For they, knowing the Lord, would gladly give for His use whatever He may desire. Jesus knew the hearts of all; who were worthy to receive Him, as Zacchæus; who were worthy to serve Him with their gifts, as the owners of the colt.

As Jesus had said, so it came to pass, lest He should even seem to wrong anyone. Consent being freely and immediately given, the disciples brought the colt, and having cast their garments upon him they set Jesus thereon; on the garments, that is, paying Him the honour due unto a king. Thus by a significant action they acknowledged Him for their King, as nine hundred years before the Captains of Israel had acknowledged and proclaimed Jehu. 2 Kings ix. 13. All this was done in fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy, ch. ix. 9; a prophecy neither understood nor indeed remembered. It was only after Jesus was glorified that the disciples perceived how so many of His words and acts combined for the fulfilment of all Types and all Scriptures.

This, then, is the King of Israel, riding forth in royal progress to His own city and His own people; riding that all may see Him; on an ass, as the Prince of Peace, not with chariots and horsemen and weapons of war; but meek and lowly, just and having salvation, speaking peace unto the heathen. Zech. ix. 10. Such is His first Advent. Even as He comes to us now, year by year, day by day, in call and recall, and every gracious manifestation of Himself to our soul. Such shall not be His second Advent. Then He shall come riding, not upon an ass nor bringing peace, but upon the White Horse, mightily and swiftly for war, with His bow in His hand, and the sharp sword going out of His mouth, to conquer and to rule with a rod of iron. Rev. vi. 2; xix. 11-16. Blessed are they who can rightly rejoice and fear not at His coming in meekness, who can receive Him and praise Him now as their King and their God. For they only shall rejoice and fear not when He shall come in His power to execute judgment upon all His enemies.

297. *Jesus welcomed as King.* St. Luke xix. 36-40.
St. John xii. 13, 17-19.

AS He rides on, as yet attended only by His immediate disciples and friends, there meet Him this great multitude from Jerusalem. At once they welcome Him as a King; though silently at first. They spread their garments in the way, and branches from the trees also, as if the earth were not worthy to be touched by the beast which bears so great a person. Thus, like the disciples, they receive Him as a monarch. The disciples and the multitude blend into one band, as before Him, around Him, and behind, they attend Him in His royal progress.

Still they are silent. No glad acclaim of many voices yet rings out His welcome. They are waiting their time, till they have mounted the brow which stands before them crowned with its olive trees. And now they reach the summit; and, on the opposite height, the Holy City of God, the joy of the whole earth, rises into sight in all her majesty and beauty. The valley of Jehoshaphat, which lay between, only served to add a fuller glory to the Hill of Sion, crowned with the palaces of Herod and the Temple of the living God. At the sight the voice of joy and praise awoke. The whole multitude, no less than the disciples, broke forth into shouts of praise and of faith; praise to God for the mighty works that they had seen; faith in Jesus as the long-looked-for Messiah. 'Hosanna, save, Lord, we beseech Thee! Son of David! The Blessed One! The King of Israel! Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven, Glory in the Highest, Hosanna in the Highest!' These are their titles for Him, their acknowledgment, their song of faith and hope and praise. They make Him Saviour, and King, the Fulfiller of prophecy, the Peacemaker between earth and Heaven, the Deliverer of their nation, a greater than Solomon.

And in proof that they were singing no idle song, founded upon the mere excitement of the moment, those who had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave, spoke openly of the miracle. What greater proof could be brought of His Kingship, unless He should then and there work some mightier miracle before their eyes?

But jealous ears are near Him, and envious tongues. Certain Pharisees among the multitude would silence these notes of praise. They would

have Him rebuke His disciples. Not so. Rather than the Son of God should lose His due praise, the very stones would wake up into life and voice, and put the children of Abraham to shame.

He accepts, therefore, as rightly His own, all these titles which the multitude, scarce knowing what they mean, have bestowed upon Him. And the Pharisees cease their objections, mortified and baffled, complaining that, in spite of all their efforts, the whole world has gone after this Jesus of Nazareth, this heretical teacher, this disturber of the public peace!

298. *Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.* St. Luke
xix. 41-44.

ALL are rejoicing save One. They see only the present glory of their city, the marble terraces and golden roofs flashing in the sunshine, the solid walls, with the everlasting hills standing around, like as the Lord standeth round about His people. Ps. cxxv. And here is the Son of David come at last to sit upon that throne of His father, come in the Name of the Lord! Surely He would send the rod of His power out of Sion. Surely He would reign until He had put all His enemies under His feet. Ps. cx. Therefore they greatly rejoice.

And He? When He beheld the city He wept over it. Even in this hour of His greatest triumph He wept. As in the exceeding glory of His Transfiguration, He spake of His decease; just as in His mightiest miracle He wept and groaned in spirit, so it is now. The law of the Saviour's earthly life was that sorrow must mix its bitterness in every cup of seeming joy.

Why does He weep? Is it because He knows

how little these shouts of welcome are to be trusted, because He has the Cross already in His heart? No. He hid not His face nor turned away His back from the spitting and the scourge. It is that He sees, under that fair worldly prosperity, that religious profession, that glorious worship, only rottenness, and hypocrisy, and empty form. He wept to think that the old warnings spoken so often and in vain were soon to be awfully fulfilled; the fault was the same from generation to generation; the punishment, so long delayed, must fall at last with crushing severity. Jer. xxii. 21-27. He wept to think that the city whose walls should have been Salvation, and her gates Praise, Isa. lx. 18, should within forty years see her gates thrown down and her walls shattered, her palaces ruined, her holy and beautiful House burned with fire, not one stone standing upon another, her children lying about the streets dying with famine and pestilence and wounds. And these things only the beginning of sorrows, the outward type of their Church ruined, their nation scattered, the thousands of Abraham's children dead in unbelief.

If thou hadst known—oh, that thou hadst known—even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! Too late now! They are hid from thine eyes!

Even to the letter was this prophecy fulfilled when the Roman army besieged and destroyed Jerusalem utterly; and the survivors were carried into a miserable captivity, scarce finding a purchaser. Deut. xxviii. 45-68.

He wept over it. Is there nothing in Christian cities at this day, nothing in the great cities of our own land, to touch the loving, pitying heart of Jesus, to grieve His Holy Spirit? Are there, under

our fair outside, and in the very shadow of our Churches, no presumptuous sins, no crying unbelief, no wilful closing of eye and ear to His warnings? Do we not know enough of such things to make us weep with Him? Take heed, then, while thou weepest over the sins of others, that thou hate and put away thine own, in this thy day of His merciful visitation.

299. *Jesus entering Jerusalem.* St. Matt. xxi. 10, 11, 14-17; St. Mark xi. 11.

THE tears and the warning, if observed by any besides the disciples, made no break in the joyful excitement of the crowd. The procession descended the western slope of the Mount of Olives, crossed the valley and the brook Kedron, and entering the city, made at once for the Temple. How different was all this from His previous humble and retiring behaviour! Hitherto He had always entered on foot, as a poor man, unmarked among the many thousands who came up to the Feasts. Hitherto, or at least till the last few months, He had charged those whom He healed to say nothing of His miracles. He had forbidden those who by sight or faith understood something of His greatness, to speak of what they knew. But since the raising of Lazarus, perhaps from an earlier date, He shewed Himself openly, accepting the titles of Son of David from blind Bar-Timæus, and of King of the Jews at this time. Now He is entering the city publicly, with pomp and display, not as a traveller, but as a man of rank and authority, making Himself a King. In fact He gave His enemies a handle against him which they were not slow to take. St. Luke xxiii. 2. 'Who is this?' was at once

the question asked by thousands. They may have known His Name, and yet have asked, wondering what this triumphal entry meant, and what His purpose was. 'Jesus the prophet, He from Nazareth of Galilee,' is the answer. Onward He passed, the crowd of attendants increased by blind and lame; and then, entering into the Temple, He healed all that came to Him. And still the cry goes up, in the very courts of the House of God, in the place where God alone should be entreated and adored, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' The children now have taken up the song. More and more perplexed, the Chief Priests and Scribes again remonstrated with Him. 'Is this the place to work miracles?' they seem to ask. 'Is this the praise which a man ought to receive, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and this the place for it? Bid the children hold their peace.'

This day the mysteries of God were hid from the wise and prudent, to be revealed unto babes. St. Luke x. 21. Jesus reminds them of the Psalm which speaks so clearly of Himself and of His sovereign power. These little children, the worthiest to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, have learned the new song of that Kingdom. Their mouth is, by God's power, giving the perfect praise, though the childish mind may not understand the full meaning of the word. The Pharisees, by reason of their very age and wisdom, believed not, and therefore praised Him not, and would have stopped the mouths of the children.

There is no further argument. His enemies cannot openly resist Him. They must work in secret.

And when He had looked round about upon all things, as one who had the right to examine for

praise and for blame, the eventide being now come, He left them and returned to Bethany with the Twelve. There in the house of Martha, in the company of Mary and Lazarus, He found a refuge from the strife of tongues.

300. *Greeks would see Jesus.* St. John xii. 20-26.

AT the Passover, as at Pentecost, devout men out of every nation under Heaven, Jews and proselytes—that is, converts—came up to Jerusalem to worship. Most or all of them would hear the shouts of the multitudes, and the crying in the Temple. Drawn to look and listen, they would ask with heartfelt interest, ‘Who is this?’

Among them were certain Greeks, strangers by blood, but converted and regularly admitted into the Jews’ religion. They had, we suppose, seen the triumphal procession pass by. They had followed to the Temple; and there, while Jesus went into the court of the Jews, they have humbly remained in their own court, the court of the Gentiles, beyond which they might not pass. There they saw the blind and the lame guided and supported into His presence, and in a little while return, seeing, walking and leaping, and praising God. There they heard the song of the children, with some faint echo of His voice, as they looked over the middle wall of partition. This does not satisfy them. They come therefore to Philip—an Apostle bearing a Greek name, and perhaps connected with Greek families—with the request, ‘Sir, we want to see Jesus, to speak with Him.’ Philip, surprised and hardly knowing how to act, tells Andrew, who was of his own city, St. John i. 44, and who being one of the four most favoured, might know how far the Lord would be

disposed to receive these strangers. It is remarkable, again, that Philip had, brought his friend, and Andrew his brother, to Jesus, St. John i. 41, 45 ; and what they did at the beginning, they may have done frequently since. Then the two Apostles tell Jesus. With some hesitation—for He had bidden them not to go in the way of the Gentiles, St. Matt. x. 5, —they bring these Greeks before Him. It is as if their minds were now opening to the largeness of His love, in spite of ancient Jewish narrowness.

We do not doubt that Jesus received these Greeks with all kindness. But St. John passes this over, and goes on at once to shew us the Lord's mind on this new application. Already the spring-tide of His Cross and Passion makes its warmth and power to be felt. Already, as the buried roots beneath the earth have their hour of swelling and germinating, in expectation of the sunny hour when the first tender shoot may dare to pierce the soil, so these Gentile hearts are yearning for the Christ. The hour is come when the Son of Man should be glorified by a Church of all nations and tongues. That Church with its multitude which no man can number, must be born out of His death. The corn of wheat in the barn abideth alone. Dropped into the earth, it dies ; and dying becomes the parent of many full ears and much fruit. He is the true wheat. Therefore He must die, that His death may be the life of the world. They too, who wanted now to see Him, must understand that to be His brings not worldly safety, but persecution, self-sacrifice, a willing death. The reward shall be life eternal. Let the servant only follow in His master's footsteps. Then in the great reward he shall be ever with his Master, he shall be honoured by the Father of Jesus.

301. *The Voice from Heaven.* St. John xii. 27-36.

THE triumph of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem was clouded with the thought of the blind, obstinate hearts of the Jews, and of the ruin, temporal and eternal, which they were laying up for themselves. The joy in these firstfruits of the Gentiles was darkened by the forebodings of His own Passion and Death. So thoroughly is the Son of God one with us in all natural human feelings, that He feared even while He desired the wondrous warfare of the Cross. In His human nature He feared the pain of death, even as in His Divine nature He abhorred its shame. He does not hide from the disciples the dread which has come over Him. Now is His soul troubled. Shall He pray to be saved from this hour, pray that the world's salvation may be won at a less cost? But it was to die that He came unto this hour. This rather shall be His prayer,—‘Father, glorify Thy Name in Me.’ For whatever He does, He would do it to the glory of God. 1 Cor. x. 31. In all He has sought the glory of Him that sent Him, not His own. That is all He seeks now, though it bring Him to the Cross.

A voice from Heaven approves the prayer. In many ways the Father had glorified His Name in Jesus. He will do so again in the Cross and the Resurrection. If the resurrection of Lazarus was to the glory of God, much more that of Jesus. St. John xi. 4. Some who stood by thought that it thundered—the Greeks, perhaps; others, the Jews, thought that an Angel spoke to Him. All heard the voice, few distinguished the words. It was thus at St. Paul's conversion. Acts ix. 7; xxii. 9. The Lord explains. It was a voice, not for His sake,

but for theirs ; a sign and token from the Father that He was King indeed ; an assurance that now was coming a time of proving all men ; that now the Prince of this world, the devil, was to be cast out, while Jesus, lifted up on the Cross, should draw all men unto Him, Greeks as well as Jews. Col. ii. 14, 15.

They perceive that He is speaking of His death, and ask Him to reconcile this with the universal belief that the Christ was to abide for ever. Moreover they ask Him of the Son of Man. Now He had not at this time spoken of the Son of Man. Had they then heard of His words to Nicodemus, St. John iii. 14, 15, in which He compared the Son of Man with the serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness ? But He does not answer their questions. They will know and understand shortly. The road to knowledge is obedience, the use of the light which will soon have passed away. For to believe in the light and to walk in the light is the looking to the Son of Man lifted up on His Cross, is the cleansing from all sin by His Blood, 1 St. John i. 7 ; is being a child of the light and the knowing all things. With these words, dim at present, but so soon to be full of light, He departed, and hid Himself. For His time was not yet come to draw all men unto Himself.

302. *Unbelief of the Jews.* St. John xii. 37-50.

THESE many works of power, these many words of wisdom, what was their real effect upon the Rulers of the Jews ? Reasonable men they were, able to see facts and, for the most part, to judge of them correctly. Yet they believe not on Him. Did they then deny the miracles ? or attribute them to the power of Beelzebub ? or explain them away ?

or look on them as common things and no proofs of a Divine mission? Something of each in turn. Isaiah had foreseen it all, and foretold it. They were but fulfilling the Scriptures. Believe they did not, for they could not. The blind eye, the hard heart, were of God's working, lest they should see, and understand, and be converted, and healed.

There is no harder saying than this in the whole Bible. First spoken by Isaiah, it is cited by the Lord at the beginning of His ministry when He began to speak in parables; St. Mark iv. 11; taken up by St. John now, repeated by St. Paul when, after his solemn summons to his countrymen and his long day's shewing how Jesus had fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, some believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not. Acts xxviii. 23-27. They did not wish to believe. They chose not to believe. Then God hardened their hearts that they *could* not. This was their punishment.

These things Isaiah spoke, when he saw the Son of God in His Glory, sitting upon His throne surrounded by the Angel host. Isa. vi. 1-10.

Yet some believed, believed without faith, if we may use this expression; that is, they could not resist the evidence of their senses. But they could not get so far as to confess their faith openly. They could not act up to what their conscience told them was right. They were afraid of being excommunicated, of losing their privileges in Church and State. St. John ix. 34. So they prudently held their tongues. Their faith died out. They lost the power of believing. Ah, that respect for the world's opinion! It is the same now as ever; at the root of much cowardice in religion, at the root of much practical unbelief.

For the encouragement and the warning of these, that they might know that faith in Him was faith in God, the sight of Him, the beholding of God, Jesus cried—cried aloud—as something worthy to be heard and accepted by all. He Himself is come down from the Father, a Light unto the world; that they who believe in Him may not walk in darkness and sin, but in light and holiness. Whether men believe or not, He is come to judge, as one whose authority was resisted, and must be established by force. He is come with fresh mercy to save the world. His word shall be the judge to save or condemn at the last day. For that word is not merely from Himself. It is from the Father. He Himself is but the minister; content to obey in all He says and does. For He knows, St. John iii. 11, that if men will receive His Word it is the message of life everlasting. For it is the revelation of the Will of God.

To teach that commandment and to do it, the Son of God came into the world. And that commandment, taught and done by Him, preached throughout the world by His Church, carried throughout the world by His Scriptures, believed and rejected, shall judge us, to life or death eternal, in the last Day.

303. *Jesus, hungry, seeks Fruit.* St. Matt. xxi.
18-23.

FROM the Sabbath to the evening of the Last Supper the Lord Jesus appears to have spent His nights at Bethany, coming into Jerusalem for the greater portion of each day. For He taught daily in the Temple. Poor as He was, their scanty purse would have been sorely tried by the cost of a

lodging in the city for Himself and His disciples. Martha's house at Bethany was always open to Him as a loved and honoured guest. And under her roof He was more free to come and go at any hour of day or night than He could have been within the walled and gated city of Jerusalem. To Bethany, therefore, He retired at the close of the day of His triumphant reception by the Jewish people—Palm Sunday; and on the morrow, as He went into the city, He was an hungered.

Does not this hunger tell a tale of nightly watchings, and prayers, and fastings? How came it except by His having risen up a great while before day, and, as His custom was, going out to pray alone, having left the disciples instructions where to meet Him? For had He risen only with the others, they would never have allowed Him so to discredit their hospitality as to leave their roof without first setting before Him the usual morning meal. By this hunger we learn the truth of His human nature, like to ours in its necessities and its pains. In His bearing it of free choice we see His love, that He would know how to feel for us by feeling with us; we mark His severe self-discipline, that He would be in all points tempted like as we are.

Seeing a fig-tree near, He came to it, seeking fruit, and found nothing but leaves only. St. Mark gives this explanation—'For the time of figs was not yet.'

The words, given in explanation, only serve at first sight to increase the difficulty; as if this was the reason why there were no figs to be found, only leaves. There are many interpretations offered. But are not these words given rather as the reason why He went expecting to find fruit there? Fig-

time—fig-harvest, as we should say—was not yet. The tree had not been stripped of its fruit. If it were not barren, figs in plenty should have been found upon it, though unripe. Jesus expected to find figs there; because fig-harvest was not yet come.

He was not come into the world to judge the world. But here, in type and figure, He has examined and judged. Straightway He passes sentence: 'No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever!' His disciples heard it, wondering. The act seemed so unworthy of His greatness and mercy; the condemnation of a tree! Next morning, as they passed, they beheld the tree dried up from the roots.

Peter calls the Lord's attention, seeking an explanation. The answer is not so simply given as we might have expected. But we can interpret for ourselves, reading this action in the light of other miracles and the parables of this week. The fig-tree was the Jewish Church. And what was its great fault, mentioned so distinctly by St. John just now? It would not and could not believe. It bore no fruit. The disciples ask concerning the tree. The Lord speaks of what had kindled His anger in the unfruitful Church. Therefore He bids His disciples to have faith, to work in faith, above all to pray in faith. By faith they shall work mightiest miracles. By faith they shall obtain whatever they may desire.

304. *The Fig-tree cursed and withered.* St. Mark xi. 12-14, 20-26.

THIS miracle, taken simply as an exercise of power, has distressed some tender minds, has been the target of many unbelieving scoffs. Why

should a *tree* be cursed and killed, a thing which has no moral sense, no choice between good and evil? So they ask, charging impatience and vengeance upon our blessed Lord. If we looked at it simply as the work of disappointed craving, and of impatient anger, we might with reason be distressed. But it was not so. This tree, rich with its full leaves, poor with its no fruit, is but the type of the Jewish Church. His hunger was the hunger after righteousness. He came seeking good works, the fruits of faith, on that tree which stood fair among the nations, flourishing with its thick leaves of religious profession. The tree could not have produced these leaves unless the principle of life had been strong within it. It was a healthy and flourishing tree. The soil was good, and the climate. The rains from above had fed it, the warm sunshine had quickened it into its promising luxuriance of growth. So it was with the Jewish Church, planted in good ground, watered by the gracious rain of the Holy Spirit, and sunned by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. It made a fair show, from the Pharisees downward. Religious profession was earnest, religious ceremonial was exact. Jesus had warned it by His word. He will warn His disciples by His act. He comes seeking fruit. There is none. The tree has had its day; its visitation has come. The sentence is pronounced. As the tree is dried up from the roots, so shall the city be withered from the foundations.

Our Lord's miracles are all lessons of power; mostly of mercy; here of judgment. His lessons of merciful power are taught upon the bodies and souls of men; His lessons of chastising power are taught upon the swine, the unclean animal, and

upon the senseless tree. And the lesson is clear. First to the Jewish Church, then to the Christian Church, to every particular branch and congregation. Profession without obedience, leaves without fruit, invite the Judge to visit, to prove, to condemn with a speedier and heavier judgment.

To every single soul Christ comes after the same manner. Not judging thus and condemning, at the first invitation, but warning and sparing, giving time for repentance. Woe unto the soul which knoweth not the time of its visitation! Woe unto that soul to which He comes for the last time, drawn by its profession, its boasted faith, its formal empty obedience! He seeks fruit, the fruit of faith which worketh by love. What hast thou to show? Hast thou brought forth wherewith to satisfy His hunger? If not, thy lot shall be like the tree. No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. Henceforward thy day of grace is passed. Thy life will be so withered up that thou shalt not draw grace from the ministry of the Church on earth, or from the outpourings of the Spirit from Heaven.

As yet thou art not so judged and condemned. Wouldest thou be saved? Then pray to Him who gives thee that will, to give thee the power to bring forth much fruit, that He may in that Day find in thee that which He seeks.

305. *Buyers and Sellers in the Temple.* St. Mark xi. 15-19.

THE disciples have seen their Lord seeking fruit on the fig-tree in vain. They have heard His sentence, that it shall bear no fruit for ever. Now they are to see Him seeking fruit from the spiritual tree of the Jewish Church, finding leaves only, and

by His action this day and His words on the following days, prophesying and pronouncing the same doom.

Arrived in Jerusalem He entered into the Temple. It was early in the morning, and the sacred courts were full of all manner of traffic. At the beginning of His ministry He had roused the attention of the multitudes by driving the buyers and sellers out of His Father's House. He does the same now at the end of His ministry. Partly, of course, to teach them reverence for the House of God; partly also to keep their attention fixed upon Him as one coming with authority in spiritual things, and, again, to remind them that He is the same Jesus who three years before purified the Temple. For then a very striking conversation occurred, having reference to His Death and Resurrection. And this He would now recall to the memory of the disciples, if not to that of the Jews. St. John ii. 18-22.

There are differences between the two miracles; for miracles we must call them, seeing that He, single-handed, drove this multitude before Him. At the beginning of His ministry He had found sheep and oxen in the Temple; and He had armed Himself with a scourge of small cords, with which to strike and drive out both beast and man. Now we read nothing of sheep and oxen, or scourge of small cords. His action was perhaps more calm, though not less effectual. Now He will not suffer any vessel to be carried through the Temple. Then He spoke of it as His *Father's* House. Now He seems to claim it as *His own*,—*My* House. Then He spoke rather of the sanctity of the place, as *God's*. Now He insists on its right use, that *men* may in it approach God in prayer. And His words

go beyond the Jewish Church in this. He quotes Isaiah's prophecy, ch. lvi. 6-8. It is the House of Sacrifice, the House of Prayer for *all people*, for *all the Gentiles*. St. Mark xi. 17. And in condemning them as having made it a den of robbers, He refers them to God's warning, Jer. vii. 1-16, that they and their Temple, of which they made such boast and which they had so horribly defiled, should be cast out of His sight.

The House of Prayer for all the Gentiles! Already certain Greeks had claimed their part in Him, and the chosen and peculiar people were sinning away their birthright. A little while, and the virtue of their sacrifices would be fulfilled in His own all-perfect Sacrifice. A little while, and the sentence would be executed. No more fruit from that Church. It shall be dried up from the roots, twice dead. The Temple shall be cast down, not one stone left upon another. And the Temple of His Body, which they shall destroy for the moment, He will after three days raise up again, to be the Temple of all people in the Church Catholic for ever. Rev. xxi. 22.

306. *The Temple of God.* St. Luke xix. 45-48 ;
1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

REVERENCE for Holy Places is the first lesson instinctively drawn from such an act and such words as these. All worldly business, still more all sinful thoughts and desires, must be banished from the House of God.

And why? Because the Church is the place of prayer, set apart for religious worship? Yes, and for higher reasons still. The Temple of the Jews was holy because God did indeed come down to

dwell therein, to abide therein for ever. 1 Kings viii. 11-13. There, in the Holy of Holies, upon the Ark of the Covenant, between the Cherubim, the Glory of the Lord in its exceeding brightness made itself to be seen. Although that visible glory granted to the Jew does not shine forth before our eyes, the Church of the Christian is no less holy than the Jewish Tabernacle and Temple. The Lord's Presence is not withdrawn. Before our eyes Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us, in the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood. Gal. iii. 1. There, under those earthly forms of bread and wine, by the power of the Holy Ghost, He is as truly present as He was under the visible Glory of the former sanctuary. There we see Him by faith, and, though He is ascended to His Father, we are permitted to touch Him. St. John xx. 17. There, with Angels and Archangels, and all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify our glorious unseen Lord. Therefore we reverence our Churches as His dwelling-place.

But besides these buildings of stone and mortar there are other Temples of God which are to be revered. The Christian's body is a Temple of God, is holy. 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; vi. 19. At our Baptism the Holy Ghost was given us, to dwell within us. Therefore, when we are shocked at the profaneness of the Jews in making the Temple of God a market for buying and selling, a shop of unjust gain, a den of robbers, when we shrink from any turning our Churches into places of worldly traffic or pleasure, let us also remember that this same dishonour is done to God by every wilful sin which we commit with our bodies. Every Christian ought to have the same zeal for the purity of his own body that he feels for the sanctity of the House

and Altar of God, such a zeal as Jesus shewed when the disciples remembered how it was written—'The zeal of Thine House hath eaten Me up.'

This is our glory, our strength, that God dwells within us. This is our danger also, that now, sinning wilfully, especially by fleshly sins, we defile the Temple of God. And if any man defile the Temple of God, him will God destroy. We are not—we cannot be—like heathen. We are answerable for higher grace; we look for a higher reward or a more terrible punishment in the day when He shall come suddenly to His Temple, to purify the sons of Levi, Mal. iii. 1-3; those whom He has made to be priests before Him, and called to render their bodies a living sacrifice to Him and a reasonable service. Rom. xii. 1.

And He was daily teaching in the Temple, drawing the people after Him, to the indignation of the Rulers. And at evening He returned to Bethany.

307. *By whose authority?* St. Mark xi. 27-33.

ON the morrow, after passing the barren fig-tree, now dried up from the roots, and answering the disciples' wondering remarks with the exhortation to faith and prayer, and (St. Mark adds) forgiveness, Jesus leads them as before into the Temple. According to His custom, He is again teaching the people. And His old enemies the Chief Priests and Scribes come to Him with one of their malicious, vexing questions. When, three years before, He drove the buyers and sellers from the Temple, they came asking Him for some sign of His authority. They ask Him, as was only natural, the same now. If He had already in some measure claimed Divine authority by speaking of the Temple as His own

House, He had still to explain who gave Him this authority, and in what way.

In return He asks a question which shall confute the gainsayers and yet establish the believers. What was the ministry of John the Baptist? Was it by Divine, or by human, authority that he came preaching and baptizing? John was one witness, and a very important one. The Pharisees had gone out to hear him, and had sent to ask him whether he were not the Christ. And he, seeking no glory for himself, pointed them to Jesus. St. John i. 19-36. All the Rulers of the Jews understood that John the Baptist bore witness to Jesus, as to Christ. Jesus had already appealed to John, and then again to His own miracles. But the Rulers would believe neither the one nor the other. St. John v. 32-36. The common people, on the contrary, had listened to John with faith and repentance. They had accepted his Baptism as bringing them forgiveness of their sins.

The Pharisees, therefore, were by this question completely baffled. To reply that John was a man sent from God would lay them open to this further question,—Why then did ye not believe Him? And to this they could, of course, give no reply. They would then be driven by their silence to admit that they had refused to believe in the teaching of a man whom they acknowledged to come from God; to admit, in fact, that they were resisting God. The only way of clearing themselves was to say that John was only a very wonderful preacher. But such an answer would be looked upon by the listening multitudes as downright blasphemy. All the lower orders regarded John as a prophet indeed, and would be ready to stone anyone who said aught to the contrary. They could not tell, they said.

Then they could not in fairness claim from Jesus an answer to their question.

He did not answer their question simply, as He might have done. Do we wonder at it? Yet had He not answered that same question again and again? Had He not proved Himself by His miracles and wonders and signs? Acts ii. 22. Yes. They knew all. But they would not believe, although one had risen from the dead.

It is to this we may come, if we resist the Holy Ghost—to be near Christ, seeing Him face to face, asking Him questions, never one whit nearer to faith or love, never arriving at the knowledge of the Truth so as to be saved.

308. *The Two Sons.* St. Matt. xxi. 28-32.

IN case, however, His enemies are still so blinded that they will not perceive the lesson He would teach, Jesus puts to them another question; this time in a parable. So it was when Nathan the prophet came to David with his message from God, convincing the guilty king out of his own mouth. 2 Sam. xii. 1-7. For our consciences are often quick to see the fault of another, and to condemn him, while we ourselves are going on still in the same wickedness, never suspecting that the Lord has departed from us.

A very simple tale it is. A certain man had two sons whom he sent to work in his vineyard. The first bluntly refused to go. But afterwards he repented and went. The second was ready enough with his lip-service. But he went not. How does this seem to you? the Lord asks. Which of these two did his father's will? The first, of course, they reply.

Now what has this parable to do with them? They are that other son. They have heard their father's voice. They have answered, 'I go, sir,' day after day. This has been their boast and their pride, that they have never refused obedience. Yet what is the fact? The Publicans and harlots are coming into the Kingdom of God before you Scribes, and Pharisees, and Chief Priests. John the Baptist came unto you in the way of righteousness—and here the Lord almost answers His own question to which they had not dared to make reply—you Rulers heard him, but you believed not nor obeyed, although you were so taken up with the idea of your own perfection. These Publicans and harlots, these who had refused to serve God, repented, and went before it was too late. You saw them going in. Their example might have awakened you to a sense of your negligence and your duty. The power of John's preaching upon them, leading them in the way of righteousness, ought to have convinced you then, if it had not convinced you before, that he was one more messenger from God. Still you repented not afterwards, to believe him. These Rulers,—with their 'I go, sir,' yet not going,—were but as the tree with its abundance of leaves, and no fruit.

This parable of the Two Sons applies also to the Gentiles and the Jews; the Gentiles believing and repenting after generations of disobedience; the Jews, boasting of their obedience, yet leaving undone all the weightier matters of the law. It has its force, again, for all in the two great classes of unprofitable professors and returning penitents. Our Father's word to us is, 'Son—go work—to-day.' There is the task set—'go work'; the time—'to-day.' Let us take heed that the words of our lips

are carried out in our lives. And let us take comfort also as well as warning in the thought that the son who first refused to obey, was accepted on his repentance, as a doer of the Father's will; and that even that other, who said, 'I go,' and went not, might have repented afterward so as to believe and be saved.

309. *The Wicked Husbandmen.* St. Luke xx. 9-16.

BUT there is a worse thing than mere neglect of work; there is wilful rebellion and resistance to the Holy Spirit. This too had been the sin of the Jews. And of this Jesus goes on to speak, in the hearing of all the people.

A householder planted a vineyard, bestowing upon it all care and pains. Then, departing into a far country, he let it to husbandmen who were to pay their rent out of the fruit, according to a common arrangement in eastern countries. That vineyard is the Church or Kingdom of God, which He had made for Himself. Isa. v. 1, 2. He had hedged it in with the wall of partition from the Gentiles. He had furnished it with all necessary things. He had put the children of Jacob into possession of it, that Priests and people might bring forth fruits of righteousness. His departure into a far country would be, perhaps, fulfilled in the withdrawal of His immediate guidance upon the death of Moses and their entrance into the promised land; Deut. xxxiv. 10-12; when He no longer led them by the Pillar of the Cloud and of the Fire. He was never really far from them, as we know.

Time went on. The householder sent servants to receive his rent. These were in turn beaten, shamefully entreated, sorely wounded, all being sent empty

away. Some indeed were killed. At last he sent his son. Then came the crowning wickedness. The husbandmen resolved to kill the son, as being the heir, with a view to holding the vineyard henceforward as their own by right of possession. Thus it was between God and His people. He sent His prophets, requiring obedience and worship, fruits of righteousness. But the Jews rejected some, as Samuel; shamefully handled some, as Jeremiah; slew some, as Zechariah and Isaiah. Neh. ix. 26; Heb. xi. 36. Great was the long-suffering of God under these continued and daring provocations. Last of all He sent unto them His Son, His well-beloved, Heb. i. 2; no servant now, but one of the same substance with the Father, the Heir of all things. Last of all! His love and mercy could send none greater, could do no more. Surely they will reverence the Son of God!

This part of the parable was not yet fulfilled. The Son had come indeed; was speaking; was forewarning the husbandmen of the sin to which their wicked hearts were driving them, that they might, if they would, repent. We know how vain that warning was. As soon as He had told them plainly that He was the Son of God, they formally condemned Him to die. St. Luke xxii. 70, 71. They cast Him out of the city, and slew Him. Heb. xiii. 12.

What will the Lord of the vineyard do to those husbandmen? Whether it be the hearers who answer His question without at first understanding its drift, or the Lord who answers His own question, is not quite clear. It is of little importance. The true meaning of question and answer flashes at last upon some of the hearers. They understand now that His parables refer to the Jewish Church and nation; that He bids them look for the visitation of God,

an utter destruction at His hands, a giving over of their vineyard to the Gentiles. God forbid that it should be so! they say.

Then why did they not lay His words to heart, being warned? And why do not we, for whom God has done so much, equally take warning, lest we sin that very sin of theirs, lest we crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame? Heb. vi. 6.

310. *The Chief Corner-Stone.* St. Matt. xxi. 42-46.

THIS warning against obstinate rejection and striving against God, this threatening of a judgment of utter destruction, seemed to the hearers too terrible. God forbid! they reply, as if it were impossible for Him to visit them in so great wrath. But He, having spoken to their consciences, appealing to the light *within*, now brings the Scriptures to witness against them, appealing to the light *without*. Looking upon them, as one whose eye would search them with its keenness and smite them through with its truth, He asks how else the Scripture can be explained. The Psalm, cxviii. 22, speaks of a Corner-Stone, which though rejected by the builders, was to become the Head of the Corner. He Himself was that Corner-Stone; the sole Foundation, laid, where Jew and Gentile should meet and become one in the One Catholic and Apostolic Church. Eph. ii. 19-22. The Jews, be it remembered, always referred this Psalm to Messiah. Then how could this verse be interpreted except by the builders' rejection of Messiah, by Messiah's being made the sure Foundation in spite of them? It is the Lord's doing, in spite of man's resistance; marvellous in our eyes by reason of His turning the

counsels of the wicked to the completion of His designs.

And now, more plainly than He had ever yet spoken, Jesus shews them the immediate and entire fulfilment of the parable. The Kingdom of God shall be taken from the Jews and given to a nation bringing forth fruits worthy of it. Do they yet doubt? It is because they do not understand His greatness. All who are offended at Him shall even in striking at Him be broken. All who resist Him and oppose Him to the end, upon them He shall fall in the might of His judgment, grinding them to powder. Isa. viii. 14, 15. This Stone is the speaker, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, that Stone cut from the mountain without hands, born of a Virgin Mother, which was seen by Daniel to break in pieces and consume all other Kingdoms that it might stand for ever. Dan. ii. 44.

The Chief Priests and Pharisees could no longer doubt that the parables were spoken against them. He was making Himself Son of God, the Heir, the Chief Corner-Stone, the Foundation, and the Giver away of the Kingdom of God! They were wicked husbandmen, soon to be miserably destroyed! They were enemies of the truth, to be broken and ground to powder! In their indignation they would have laid hands on Him, but they feared the people, in whose eyes Jesus was a Prophet and a King.

In this way, by His wisdom and power, He had turned their words against themselves. They had come asking His authority, and He has questioned them in return. He has spoken two parables. He has appealed to the ancient Scriptures. He has applied to Himself the prophecies of David and of

Daniel. He has condemned them as enemies of God. And justly; for their own conscience condemned them as seeking His death. Yet the rebuke only hardens them and irritates them the more. At every word He speaks now they are only the more determined to kill Him.

311. *The Marriage of the King's Son.* St. Matt.
xxii. 1-7.

FURIOUS, but powerless, the Chief Priests have left Jesus. The multitude remain about Him, listening attentively; and in warning to them He speaks another parable. His judgment was to fall first on the Rulers who rejected His invitation. That all had understood. It will fall also upon those who accept it, and come in to sit at His Table, if they do so without reverent preparation. We observe more than once that, as soon as the Lord has drawn any to follow Him, He begins to speak of His service as difficult.

This parable, though in some few points like that of the Great Supper, St. Luke xiv. 16-24, differs from it in its circumstances and its lesson. Here it is a *Marriage* Feast made by a *King*. The invited guests are not at the pains to make excuse; they simply will not come; and being pressed by a second message ill-treat and kill the servants. Therefore their punishment is more than being shut out. The King sends his armies, destroying those murderers and burning up their city. Then follows the gathering of other guests, the entrance of the King, with the detection of the man who had not on a wedding garment. The first part of the parable shews the whole nation refusing to come in, and the Gentiles gathered in to the Marriage Feast.

And now, too, Jesus is putting forward more distinctly His own high claims. Just now He was as the eldest Son of the Householder. Now He is the King's Son. And the Marriage is the union of Christ with His Church—His betrothal of the Church to Himself in His coming down from Heaven, and being made Flesh—preparatory to the day when the very Marriage of the Lamb shall come. Rev. xix. 7-9. The guests had long since been invited. Now the King sends His servants to call them, all things being now ready, Esther v. 8; vi. 14, John the Baptist, the Apostles, and the Seventy, during the lifetime of Jesus. And they would not go unto Him that they might have life. Afterwards He called them Himself—though this could not be told in the parable, not being consistent with the dignity of Him who was both the King's Son and the Bridegroom—and after His crucifixion He sent His Apostles. They, like their Master, were persecuted and slain. Then fell the anger of the King. Jerusalem was utterly destroyed and burned up.

This was, indeed, the history of the Jews. They were, from the first, those that were bidden. Their whole national life was of one piece; the marriage was being made ready; the messengers sent to announce it were met with contempt and persecution. The story ends in the punishment and destruction of their Church, and city, and nation. *Their* city! the city of those murderers! So Isaiah spoke of it eight hundred years before. Isa. i. 21. So the Romans found it. And God's wrath came upon it to the uttermost.

Such is the goodness of God in preparing for His people; such is His goodness in calling them of free grace; in calling them a second time when all things

are ready ; in calling once more after that second summons was despised. Such is man's ingratitude, resistance, and rebellion. Such will be God's vengeance at the end. 2 Thess. i. 6-10.

312. *The Church the Bride of Christ.* St. Matt.
xxii. 1-14.

WHO is the King, but God ? Who is His Son for whom He makes the Marriage Feast, but Jesus our Lord ? And who is the Bride, but the Church ? Old Testament and New alike set forth the glories of God's love and man's reward, under the image of the Feast and the Marriage. Prov. ix. 1-5 ; Isa. lxii. 5. The Feast was far more than the indulgence of the appetite. It was important as the gathering of subjects, of allies, of friends. In the invitation the King shewed honour to his guests ; in its acceptance the subjects paid respect to their monarch. The Marriage Feast was part of the public celebration of the marriage, the gathering of witnesses as well as friends, a sharing of family joys and hopes.

In the Prophets and Apostles we see the messengers sent to call the guests to the Marriage. How, then, was *this* the Marriage ? For St. John, in the Book of the Revelation, speaks of the Marriage and the Marriage Feast as only then made ready. Because many of the types and prophecies and mysteries have a double fulfilment. Christ's taking upon Himself our flesh is sometimes spoken of as His Marriage with His Church, inasmuch as He then joined His Divine Nature with our human nature in His One Person. He married our nature to Himself. And again, in His sleep of death upon the Cross, and giving forth from His wounded side

the Blood and Water—types of the two Sacraments by which Christians are new born and sustained—He is compared to Adam, from whose side, in sleep, was formed the woman Eve. So the Church is evermore called the Bride of Christ. He hath joined her to Himself, that She should be one Body, one Flesh, with Him her Head. St. Paul, speaking of Christian marriage, calls it a great mystery—the very words which He uses of the Incarnation. The union of the Word with our human nature, the union of man with woman, are two great mysteries. 1 Tim. iii. 16 ; Eph. v. 23-32.

Yet, while this is indeed a marriage, while the Church is in truth the Bride of Christ, and men are invited to the Marriage Feast as even now prepared and to be enjoyed, the Church is also in some sense widowed ; widowed as a betrothed maiden bound for ever to the husband who is gone into a far country, and looking for his return. The Church, these eighteen hundred years, looks and longs for her Lord. When He returns shall be the Marriage Feast in all its joy, the perfect union of the Bride with the Bridegroom ; She, descending from Heaven, the new Jerusalem, prepared as a Bride adorned for her Husband ; He, receiving her and presenting her to Himself, glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, holy and without blemish. Then shall be heard the cry, 'The Bridegroom cometh ! Go ye forth to meet Him.' St. Matt. xxv. 6. Then shall be heard the song of the many Saints, giving glory to the Lord God, because the Marriage of the Lamb hath come, and His Wife hath made herself ready.

Blessed are they which are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb ! Rev. xix. 6-9.

313. *The Wedding Garment.* St. Matt. xxii. 8-14.

THE guests first bidden have persisted in their refusal, have slain their King's messengers, and have been utterly destroyed. The servants now go forth again. Men of all conditions are called by God's free grace and gift, both bad and good, and the wedding is furnished with guests.

Not without reason does our Divine Teacher so often shew us this mixture of bad and good in the visible Church. The parables of the wheat and the tares, of the draw-net with its good fishes and bad, will teach us that here, to the end, the evil will ever be mingled with the good, and that the presence of misbelievers and evil-doers does not turn the Church into a synagogue of Satan.

The guests, reclining at table, await the entrance of the King. He comes in. At once His searching eye detects a guest who had not on a wedding garment. But how could men, swept up thus suddenly from the highways, have had either means or leisure to provide themselves with clothing fitted for a royal banquet? The explanation is, that the giver of the feast presented to each guest at his entrance a costly garment, to be thrown over his ordinary clothes; covering all there was about him of mean and sordid. Such presents are not unusual in India and Persia at the present day. To put the gift aside would be a double insult, first in the refusal of the King's goodness, then in the wearing of ordinary apparel. Zeph. i. 8. It seems to be a wilful and deliberate insult, too; for to the King's question no reply is made, or even attempted. The man is dumb. Quickly follows the punishment. Bind him hand and foot! Out with him, from the brightness and

gladness of the feast into the outer darkness, and the despair of the lowest dungeon!

This sitting at the Marriage Feast will therefore seem to be the gathering in of all who profess the faith of Christ, and their waiting for the coming of the King in judgment. And the Wedding Garment will represent that general endeavour after holiness and that attainment of it, which is meant by the putting on of Christ; the seeking of grace by outward means, the putting on of Christ in Baptism and the Holy Communion, especially the true repentance after careful self-examination, the stedfast purposing to lead a new life, that we may be clean and holy for the Heavenly Feast.

Else to what profit our fellowship with the Church here? To what profit our sitting down with the Saints hereafter at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb? His eye will see how we have despised the perfection of His comeliness which He would have put upon us. Ezek. xvi. 14. His eye will see the meanness of our own righteousness which we have deemed to be good enough to secure us a place at His table. Then the sentence, the binding, the casting out, the outer darkness, the weeping and gnashing of teeth. From such an end, good Lord, deliver us!

One only is mentioned as thus cast out, that each may take it to heart. But will there be only one cast out? Many are called. But few are chosen. 1 Cor. x. 1-10.

314. *The Pharisees and the Tribute Money.* St. Luke xx. 20-26.

MEANWHILE the Pharisees have been laying fresh plans. Their best chance is to entice Him into some expression which must offend either

the Roman Government or the Jewish people. If He could only be induced to commit Himself to one side or the other, their object would be attained. They therefore send to Him disciples of their own with some of Herod's party, the supporters of the national religion and the national king. These men, according to their instructions, begin with expressions of respect for the truthful, fearless character of Jesus, and then go on, as if in good faith, to ask whether they might lawfully pay tribute to Cæsar, or not. Now Cæsar was the Emperor of Rome, a heathen, by whom God's people were now held in subjection as a conquered and tributary nation. Jesus was among them, claiming to be their King, as well as their Teacher, sent from God. Had they not therefore a right to ask His advice and will on this point?

A cunning and difficult question! If He said that it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, every devout Jew would turn against Him as a deceiver, as a flatterer of the State authorities, as one who had lost faith in the Divine promises that a Son of David should reign again as king upon his father's throne. If, on the other hand, He forbade them to pay this tribute, there would be plenty to accuse Him before the Roman officers as advising resistance to their authority. The Roman magistrates were used to make short work with such offenders.

Cunning as they are, they cannot cope with His Divine wisdom. He knows their hypocrisy and falsehood. Let them bring one of the coins—the current money in which the tribute was paid. See! it bears the image and the name of the Roman Emperor. They are using that money every day in their buying and selling; that is, in thus receiving and passing his money, they are every day

acknowledging Cæsar as their king. The money is actually his. They cannot deny this. Then He answers their question. But He uses a more exact and meaning word. He does not say, *Give*, but '*Render—Give back—to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.*' As St. Paul writes to the Christians at Rome, '*Render—Give back—therefore, to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due.*' Rom. xiii. 7. But, lest any should mistake, and imagine that He is forgetful of the tribute due to a greater than the earthly king, He adds, '*And give back unto God the things that are God's.*'

Here is the Christian's rule. Obedience to the powers that are ordained of God in worldly things. Rom. xiii. 1, 2. But still more, obedience to God in spiritual things. Acts iv. 19. Happy is the people and that Church where this double obedience can be paid with a clear conscience!

315. *Church and State.* St. Matt. xxii. 15-22.

THE Christian life is beset by other difficulties besides the direct temptations to unbelief and sin. Often conflicting duties call the disciple in opposite ways. Each duty, looked at by itself, is clear enough. But if one be fulfilled, another must be neglected. Which is of first importance? That is the question; a very difficult one often to the sincere and anxious soul. How am I to do my duty to my God, without disobeying my King? How am I to do my duty to my country without dishonouring my God?

Our ruler, our country, our society, our family, make their different claims upon us. The Christian's part is to use the privileges of citizenship and to discharge its obligations; to pay his taxes honestly;

to reverence and honour those who are in authority for their offices' sake ; to pray for them, because in the peace and good government of the world the Church is able to serve her Heavenly Master in all godly quietness. With this are bound our duties to the society in which we live, duties required by the law of love, as from brother to brother ; duties to our own family, to our own selves. Subject to our duty to God, we are bound to do all we can for the good of our fellow-men, both in body, and mind, and soul.

But these are only general directions. What are we to do, for instance, when the law of God calls us one way, and the law of our country—as may unhappily be the case—calls us another ? What is the child to do when the parent requires him to steal, or to tell a lie ? What is the servant to do when master or mistress requires work to be done, so that Sunday after Sunday she cannot get to Church ? Or what are we to do, again, when there are double duties of religion and charity ? We have a sick friend. He will consider us cruel if we leave him for an hour ; and he says nursing the sick is a religious duty, which is quite true. But we think he might safely be left, and we feel that if we cannot get to the Blessed Sacrament, our soul will suffer. Which ought we to do—stay with the sick, or go to Church ? Some of these questions are more easily answered than others. For some no general rule can ever be laid down ; and often the duty which seems to have the less to do with religion is the truer service of God.

But this certainly is clear. Duty to God stands first, if we can only be sure which is duty to God. We are God's by right of Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification. Our first promises were made

to Him, at our Baptism, and they are binding for life. No relationship, no promise, no engagement of service, can come in to alter in the least degree our duty to Him. Whatever God has distinctly forbidden, that we may *not* do; no, not if the refusal cost us our life. Whatever God has distinctly commanded, that we *must* do, at any risk. All service, all affection, all pleasure, all honour is lawful, *only in the Lord*. This was the rule of the Apostles. Acts iv. 17-23. They did not stop for persecution, or threatenings of death. They belonged to God, body, soul, and spirit. 1 Cor. vi. 20. So they rendered to God the things that were God's; in life, by obedience; in death, by faith and humility; sure that He would keep safely the life which they so laid down for His sake. 2 Tim. i. 12.

316. *Question of the Sadducees.* St. Luke xx.
27-40.

ANXIOUS to discredit His teaching, yet not so bent upon His destruction as the Pharisees were, there now come to Jesus certain of the Sadducees. It is little we hear of this sect during our Lord's ministry. Yet they were quite as important as the Pharisees, rich, learned, and high in office, Acts v. 17, although not so numerous. They held that there was no resurrection of the body, no communication, at this time, between Angels or spirits and mankind. They had seldom shewn themselves hostile to Jesus. Once indeed with the Pharisees they had come tempting Him and asking a sign from Heaven. And He had rebuked them, and cautioned His disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. St. Matt. xvi. 1-6. It was only after His Ascension,

when the Apostles went forth witnessing to the Resurrection of Jesus, and preaching the resurrection of the dead, that the Sadducees appear as persecutors. Acts iv. 1, 2. Now they come, more in ridicule than in enmity. They put the case of a woman who had been seven times married, and ask to which husband she will belong when all are risen.

Gravely and sadly the Lord replies to their coarse, jesting question. With the Scriptures in their hands, they cannot understand. With the book of creation open before them, they cannot perceive the power of God. Marriage is a thing of this world. In that world there is no marriage, no bearing of children, for there is no death. The risen body will be purified from all fleshly desires and weaknesses. The risen saints will be equal to the Angels, children of God, being children of the Resurrection. That is the nature of that life, which they have so strangely mistaken.

But they have appealed to Moses. To Moses, therefore, let them go. This is the Name by which the Lord is called in his writings : 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Not the God of each in turn, but of all at the very time that He was speaking ; I am their God. Now God is not a God of the dead, but of the living. Therefore they are living before Him. More than this. The perfect man is made up of body and soul. Therefore the Patriarchs in their separation of body and soul, are yet imperfect though alive. They are not now what they were in this world. They have not received the promises. They wait the time of the restitution of all things, the regeneration, Acts iii. 21 ; St. Matt. xix. 28, when they with us shall be made perfect in the manifestation of the sons of God.

God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore they must needs live. Live indeed they did now. But they must yet live *again*, risen in the more perfect life of re-united body and soul. This Name of God implied that they should do so.

The Sadducees, in their turn, leave Him, baffled by His wisdom; certain of the Scribes, who were of the Pharisees' party, approving His answer. The multitude too are astonished at the teaching which His light has made to shine forth from the Scriptures.

317. *The Great Commandment.* St. Matt. xxii. 33-40; St. Mark xii. 28-34.

THE Pharisees will make one more trial; some of them tempting Him, others, apparently, honestly wishing to know what one so wise would answer. The question had, in a way, been asked and answered before. St. Luke x. 25. A certain lawyer, tempting Jesus, enquired what he should do to attain eternal life. The Lord replied, referring him to the Law. putting a question which the other answered as the Lord Himself answers here. The first of all the commandments is Love, perfect and entire love, to God. The second is like unto it, Love for one's neighbour as for one's self. No commandment is greater than these. These sum up all the Law and the Prophets. He who has kept these has kept all.

The first part of the answer was as old as the time of Moses. Deut. vi. 4-9. According to the command there given, the Jews taught it to their children as the summary of their duty to God, wrote it upon the gates and doors of their houses, and wore it upon their own persons, in their phylacteries. They were commanded to love the Lord their God with their whole being. This indeed is the spring

of all true religion. Fear of God with some will come first. But the soul that fears, and in its fear asks how it may be reconciled with God, soon passes from fear to love, when it learns how great is His goodness and how great is His beauty. It loves Him with all the *heart*, with the natural affections, as in Himself above all things to be desired. It loves Him with all the *soul*, as Himself only and fully satisfying its spiritual cravings, the only object of its worship. It loves Him with all the *mind*, as alone worthy to be studied by the reason; full of greatness in His goodness, All-mighty and All-wise. It loves Him, after this, with all its *strength*; not in any form of words, or passing fancy, or as a mere matter of duty. But it gives itself up altogether to Him, desires to hold *fast* by God, to possess Him, to be altogether possessed by Him. So that all other love is in Him, subject to this chief and all-pervading love. And He is chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely. Cant. v. 10-16.

Once we attain to this perfect love of God, and all that He loves we must love. Therefore, as He loves all men, so will the God-loving soul love its neighbour, that is, all men, as itself. This universal brotherly love was more than the Jew could yet understand. Thou shalt love thy neighbour—that he allowed. But he limited the word ‘neighbour’ to his own nation, if not to a narrower circle. And he added—what the law of Christ has utterly blotted out—‘Thou shalt hate thine enemy.’ Now Jesus is teaching them the length and breadth of the love which the children of God must bear to each other. He is giving them a new commandment, and yet the same that was from the beginning, that we love one another. St. John xiii. 34; 2 St. John 5. He that loves God must love his brother also.

This was admitted by the Pharisees in word. But they were slow to accept it in their hearts, or to act up to it. They could not get out of the old beaten track of tradition. Tithes, and sacrifices, and ceremonies first ; then the moral virtues ! The Scribe who had asked the question was clearer in sight, and bolder in faith, than his brethren. Such love, he declares, for God and man, is more than all the sacrifices of the law. And to him Jesus pronounces the blessing, that he is not far from the Kingdom of God.

How often do we need to be brought back to this, especially in our religious discussions ! We quarrel among ourselves which is the first and greatest commandment. Oh that Jesus would make His voice to be heard among us—‘The greatest of these is LOVE’!

318. *What think ye of Christ ?* St. Matt. xxii.
41-46.

BUT though no man durst ask Jesus any more questions, the Pharisees were still gathered together about Him, as if watching their opportunity. He, therefore, may ask these teachers of the people a question in His turn. And this, like that which He had put to them concerning the teaching of John the Baptist, St. Matt. xxi. 25-28, is calculated to touch their consciences as well as to draw their attention to proofs of His Divine character which they have overlooked. Already—this same day, most likely—He has appealed to the hundred and eighteenth Psalm, as foretelling of Him. Now He appeals to the hundred and tenth. David, by the Holy Ghost, there speaks of the coming Christ as his Lord, made to sit at the Right Hand of the

Father's Glory. To this same Psalm St. Peter and St. Paul afterwards appeal, when preaching and writing to the Jews. Acts ii. 34; Heb. x. 12, 13. Now the Pharisees all admit that the Christ was to be David's son. How can He be David's Lord also? How will they explain this double title of son and Lord?

If they cannot, were it not better to consider this prophecy more carefully? For teachers of religion must not be content to pass over difficult passages of Scripture without being able to give some interpretation. Were it not well to expect something more from the Christ than the mere restoration of David's earthly throne? There was One standing before them who had only within the last week been called by both these titles. The blind man at Jericho had called Jesus, Lord, and Son of David. The multitudes on the Mount of Olives, the children in the Temple, had sung their Hosannas to Him as the Son of David. Why then did not the Pharisees, so well instructed in the Scriptures as they were, consider these things, and watch for that spiritual kingdom which David's Son and David's Lord was to bring, the Kingdom of Christ the Son of God?

With all their boasted wisdom they could not explain this, which is so simple to us, that Jesus Christ our Lord, made of the seed of David according to the flesh, is declared to be the Son of God with power. Rom. i. 3, 4. We know the Christ, who He is, Jesus the Son of Mary, of the house and lineage of David, St. Luke ii. 4, very man, yet King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Rev. xix. 16.

The common people heard Him gladly, St. Mark xii. 37, not displeased to see Sadducees and Pharisees alike defeated by His arguments. And after

this none dared again come tempting Him with questions.

Thus it was that the Sadducees and Pharisees alike erred, not knowing the Scriptures. It was not from want of study, but from want of understanding, from blind prejudice. They formed their own ideas about the prophecies, often very wide of the truth. They passed over difficult or awkward texts without getting at the real meaning, for fear it should tell against them. There is a good deal of such Bible-reading among Christians. They get hold of one side of a truth, and steadily shut their eyes to the other side. They will not find more in the Bible than they wish to find. They pass over the very plainest passages which they are daily contradicting in their teaching and their practice, with 'Oh, that means nothing. That is to be taken figuratively, of course.' And so in their pride, they make the Word of God of none effect by their tradition. They do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.

319. *The Caution against the Pharisees.* St. Matt. xxiii. 1-12.

THE Lord's ministry to the Pharisees was now ended. With this question He had ceased to call them. Henceforward He must treat them as enemies. He must warn the people against them.

Nevertheless He respects their office. Their teaching is to be received and obeyed. For they are the successors of Moses in office and in doctrine. But while their *teaching* is to be obeyed, their *example* is to be shunned. They have added commandments of their own; commandments which they never think of keeping themselves. All they

do is outside show, for the praise of men. They cover themselves with texts of Scripture, written on parchments ostentatiously broad. They enlarge the fringes of their robes. In either case going beyond the requirements of the Law; yet utterly neglecting its spirit. Deut. vi. 4-9; Numb. xv. 37-41. The outward wearing of the words of the Law was intended to enforce affectionate remembrance of it and devout observance. Their pride and self-importance are displayed in the long robes, shewing that they were above the hard life of manual labour; in the demand to be saluted by all, in public places, as 'Rabbi, my teacher,' in the scramble for the highest places at religious and social gatherings.

The disciples are warned against these proud, empty men. They are not to crave for the title of Rabbi, or to set themselves as leaders of religious schools; not to call any man Father upon earth, as if they might cast off their own responsibility; not to take the name of Guide, as if they might usurp dominion over the consciences of disciples. One is their Teacher, over the many brethren. One is their Father, the Father in Heaven. One is their Guide, Himself, who was also the Christ. And now once more the precept of humility. True greatness in Christ's Kingdom consists in taking the lowest place.

Pride was at the bottom of all the faults of the Pharisees—spiritual pride. All their behaviour was for the eyes and the praise of men; fair enough outside, utterly rotten at the core. It concerned the multitudes to know this. Far more did it concern the disciples. They were soon to take that office of teaching and ruling which the Pharisees had held for so many years. With the duties and

the honours of the office would come the temptations. They, too, might set their hearts upon the title of Teacher, rather than on the work. They, too, might go on to form parties, and to head them. The people would be jealous each for his favourite teacher. 1 Cor. i. 12; iii. 5. The teacher's claim of authority would be followed by the unreasoning obedience of the disciple. And the evil would grow until the one Father, and Teacher, and Guide, were obscured by the earthly minister.

These are hard sayings. For the Lord has appointed His servants to be teachers and fathers and guides in His Church. Ephes. iv. 11; 1 Cor. iv. 15; Heb. xiii. 17. We must take the whole discourse together. Fathers we have in the flesh, whom we are bidden to honour: fathers we have in the Church; let us honour them likewise. Teachers we have in earthly and spiritual things; to them let us listen. Guides we have; their example let us follow; yet ever looking through them to the One Lord of all, in whom all relationship, all authority, all example are centred. If Scribes and Pharisees are to be listened to and obeyed, much more the Priests of Christ's Church. And they, while they desire and do a good work, 1 Tim. iii. 1, let them not seek the praise of men, or lord it over God's heritage. 1 St. Peter v. 3. Rather let this be their highest glory, to be called, and to be, the servants of the servants of God.

320. *The Woes unto Scribes and Pharisees.* St. Matt. xxiii. 13-39.

ALMOST these very same words are given by St. Luke, ch. xi. 42-54, as spoken at an earlier period in the Lord's ministry. They seem to fit in

more appropriately here. The voice of invitation is changed at last into the voice of judgment. The ministry which began with blessing closes with woe. Thus the Gospel has its Ebal and its Gerizim, its blessing and its curse. Deut. xi. 26-29.

Now it is, 'Woe unto Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!' Woe, eight times repeated, against their hypocrisy under different forms. Hypocrites they were, as acting a part for human praise. They would not themselves enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, neither would they suffer others to enter in. St. John ix. 34. Covetousness was added to their resistance of grace, the worst form of covetousness, oppression of the widow, Exod. xxii. 22, and the taking of God's Name in vain in their long prayers, made only for show and pretence, not in necessity or in faith of obtaining aught from God. Nothing they loved better than to have a convert. They moved heaven and earth, as we might say, to bring one single heathen over to the Jews' religion. And to what purpose? To teach him all these outward observances, without one spark of true fear and love of God; and to let him fall back as soon as they had boasted sufficiently of him. So that with their Jewish hypocrisy grafted on his own heathen uncleanness, he was twofold more the child of hell than his masters. They had, moreover, a system of right and wrong, which utterly destroyed all true spiritual religion, a law of oaths and obligations, of tithes and offerings; a standard by which little formalities were made to take the place of the very chiefest duties towards God and man, the clean hand being honoured above the clean heart. And to all this outward fairness and inward rottenness was added an ostentatious moan of regret over the sins of bygone generations; reparation made for

the offences of their forefathers even while they themselves were greedily committing the very same. Truly these Scribes and Pharisees were the children of their forefathers, not only by natural descent, as they acknowledged with pretended grief, but in very deed, in inheritance of character and conduct. They must now fill up that cup of wickedness which their fathers had handed down to them. 1 Thess. ii. 16. No hope for them now! Every sin lay at their door, except the crowning wickedness of killing the Prince of Life. Soon that would be added; and the long catalogue written in the blood of God's Saints, from Abel, the righteous, to Zachariah, the last mentioned of the martyrs in the sacred chronicles, 2 Chron. xxiv. 20-22, should be finished in the name of a truer Zacharias, the Remembrance of God, a truer son of Barachias, Son of the Blessed. For such are the meanings of these names.

Eight times, 'Woe!' Woe upon all mere outward observances of religion, however far they go! Woe upon religious zeal, upon lamentations over the ungodliness of an earlier age! For beneath were the abominable things which He hates above all others, love of worldly honour, oppression, profaneness, tampering with conscience, false tears over the sins of others without the correction of their own. He saw within; He saw to the end; the present rejection of mercy, the final impenitence, the murder of the Son of God.

Are there no such sins in our own nation, no such sins in ourselves, hidden under the fair outside of which we are daily boasting, even in the Face of the all-seeing God? Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

321. *Distinctions of Right and Wrong.* St. Matt.
xxiii. 16-22.

THERE is no need for the man who knows and keeps the first and great commandment to have a written law ever before his eyes ; no need for him to refer continually to precepts and ordinances, drawing carefully the line beyond which he may not go. Where love dwells the mind is enlightened, the conscience quickened, and the heart all eager for serving. Love watches, and knows by instinct the will of the beloved, and flies to obey it, fully and without reserve. Love wants to give all, and mourns that it has not more to give. How unlike to love, then, was the religion of the Pharisees !

As soon as love grows cold, the man begins to ask what he *must* do ; how little service he can pay to his Lord, how much service he may pay to the world and to himself without forfeiting his right to eternal life. He will keep as close to the boundary line as he dares. Then come in all sorts of fine-drawn distinctions ; many of them founded at first upon the pure moral sense of right and wrong, but pushed too far, and at last deceiving and blinding the conscience. Thus, in the matter of truth and falsehood, the simple straightforward man sees only that a promise once made must be kept. He needs not to bind himself with an oath. Others, less honest, draw a distinction between the simple promise and the oath. Then they go on to make distinctions between one oath and another ; as if an oath were more or less binding in proportion to the greatness of the thing or the person by which they have sworn. At last will come distinctions utterly contrary to common sense. Thus it was with the Scribes and Pharisees. If a man swore

by the Temple, or the Altar, his oath was not held binding; if he swore by the gold of the Temple or the gift upon the Altar, he was bound without release. Who will explain the crookedness, the twists and evasions of the conscience when it has once thrown aside the service of simple, trusting, unselfish love? It will go on to excuse itself from the plainest duties, to set up a series of new obligations, to call evil good and good evil, to make a merit even of things forbidden, to put its own narrow, grudging, selfish, ambitious rules in the place of the pure and perfect law of God.

It has been well said that the man who would keep himself safe by only committing little sins, is quite sure very soon to fall into great ones. There are, of course, degrees in guilt; sins of weakness, negligence, and ignorance, as well as sins unto death. 1 St. John v. 16. But if we try just to keep on the safe side of the boundary line, we shall never succeed. All our actions are done in the sight of God, and have reference to Him. If we willingly do the least thing which conscience tells us is displeasing to Him, and dishonouring to Him, we sin against God. And if we continually strive how far we can go, we are tempting Him to withdraw His light and guidance, and to make the light that is within us darkness. Eph. iv. 18, 19. Hardly any sin is more dangerous than this trifling with conscience. This is the cause of so much religious profession with so much unholy living. Men either cannot see their sins, or else they justify them. Let us pray Him to write all His laws on our *hearts*, that we may not reason upon them, but love them. Let this be our daily vow, 'An offering of a free heart will I give Thee, and praise Thy Name, O Lord.' Ps. liv. 6.

322. *Making Conditions with God.* St. Matt.
xxiii. 23-26.

ANOTHER way in which the blinded conscience deceives itself is choosing its own line of service, as if attention to some duties would make up for neglect in others. Now God's law is one great and perfect whole. True, some matters are weightier than others, as being foundations of the spiritual life. These must come first. It is the prayer of the heart which makes the bending of the knee acceptable worship before God. Still the two are so closely bound together, the spiritual and the bodily worship, that we can hardly think of prayer being real and from the heart when the outward reverence is refused. On the other hand, that would be no real religion which should give the bending of the knee without offering the prayer of the heart.

Now this last was the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees, part of their hypocrisy. They wanted to gain credit with the people, and with their own consciences, for great zeal in religion. Therefore in all outside show they seemed to be continually asking what more they could do. The law required them to pay tithe—the tenth part of their yearly gains—for the maintenance of the ministers of religion. This they were ready enough to do, and for fear that they should leave out anything, they paid these tithes of *all* that they possessed, even of the smallest herbs in their gardens. Their consciences had grown so tender that they would not on any account have paid a leaf too little. Then there were the laws about purifying, the washing of their furniture, their vessels, their bodies. They would not, on any account, have sat down to meat without first washing their hands. Their con-

sciences were too tender. They were shocked to see our Lord and His Apostles break this law. St. Mark vii. 1-23.

All very well, if they had only been the same in the weightier matters. The Lord approves this carefulness. But why did they not carry it to the end? They were like men who strained their drink lest any unclean insect should be in it, and yet would swallow a camel without misgiving. All this time they were neglecting justice, mercy, and faith. Their scruples, their tenderness of conscience, were only hypocrisy. Therefore, Woe unto them!

Like the Pharisees, we all have our scruples, our favourite and indulged sins. There are certain temptations which never touch us, certain sins from which we shrink with horror. And there are certain virtues, certain duties, which are entirely to our tastes. We never commit these faults; we never neglect these duties. But there are other faults which we are continually committing, other duties which we never perform. This man who is so brave and truthful, is insolent and hard, with never a kind word for the poor. This woman, so modest in her behaviour, is malicious and untruthful in her conversation. What of these faults? Why, we point to our better side. We urge that our obedience will more than make up for our disobedience. We are, in fact, bargaining with God; we persuade ourselves that we have paid Him enough, and that He ought to let us off the rest. Or, possibly, we will not see that we owe Him anything at all. Too many rule their lives after this fashion. They are quite satisfied. Unhappily the obedience does not cover the disobedience. It is all the other way. He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all. St. James

ii. 10. The inward life must first be cleansed, for then, and only then, will the outward service be acceptable before God.

323. *The Filling up of Iniquity.* St. Matt. xxiii. 32-39.

NEVER were spoken sterner words than these. For they are words of Divine despair. The last hope for the sinner is gone when, by his own hypocrisy, he has hidden his iniquity from himself, when he can mourn over the sins of others at the time that he is filling up that very cup of wickedness. As John the Baptist began with the Pharisees, so does Jesus end. St. Luke iii. 7. Serpents they are, a generation of vipers, children of the devil. In vain were they warned to flee from the wrath to come. They would not see their danger in the day of their visitation. Now they cannot escape from it. The wrath is coming upon them to the uttermost.

And what a fulness of iniquity is upon them, the iniquity set forth in the parable of the wicked husbandman! Abel was the first who fell by the persecutor's hand; the last in the historical books was Zachariah, the son of Jehoiada, whose second name, it is supposed, was Barachias. The sins of the fathers had descended to the children. And the children, inheriting their fathers' spirit, were crowning their fathers' acts with the final wickedness, the murder of the Son of God. Therefore the big black cloud of Divine wrath, slowly gathering through those many hundred years, was now about to empty itself on this generation. In vain had He warned them. Madly and ignorantly a few days hence they will clamour against Him,—‘His

blood be on us and on our children.' Truly they knew not what they did.

Even while He is pronouncing the irreversible sentence, the sacred human heart of Jesus is yearning with a parent's, and more than a parent's love, over these rebellious children. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!'—the name is twice repeated in His tender pity—Vision of peace where there is no peace! Desolate her house would be, but not by His fault. He would have gathered her children together; by His messengers all through her cruel time of deaf ears and bloody hands and hard hearts; by Himself now; gathered them as the loving mother-bird gathers, and shelters, and feeds her helpless young.

Here, again, Jesus is making Himself God. For who but God can shelter a people under the shadow of His wings? It was thus that David prayed and trusted; thus that God promised protection to His people. Ps. xvii. 8; xci. 4; Deut. xxxii. 11, 12. Such help is not in man, nor in Angel, but in God only.

And they would not. Therefore their house, no longer *His* house, is left unto them desolate. The eye of man would not detect the difference. But over her battlements and gates and walls was written, in characters which the eyes of the chastising Angel could read, 'Ichabod, the glory is departed.' 1 Sam. iv. 21, 22. No longer the House of the Lord, the spoiler should enter in. Jer. xii. 7.

Now the Son of David, the King of Israel, passes from His house, never again to enter in, never to be seen by her children till they shall know Him and welcome Him as the promised Messiah which was to come. The next time they see Him shall be when He cometh in His glory; ch. xxvi. 64. And

Jerusalem, which then was His House, His Church, His people, never has seen Him since. The veil is upon their hearts. Yet even now they may see Him by faith, if they will acknowledge Him, as St. Paul saw Him, and acknowledged Him, God over all, Blessed for ever. Rom. ix. 5. Otherwise they must wait till that Day when every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and they shall mourn for Him. Zech. xii. 10.

These same words of lamentation over the rebellious city are given by St. Luke, as spoken earlier in Galilee. St. Luke xiii. 34, 35. But whether spoken once or twice, they must surely represent the Saviour's disappointed love as He thought of, and looked upon, His own city, where stood the throne of David and the House of God, now so soon to lie prostrate under the foot of the destroyer.

324. *The Widow's Mite.* St. Mark xii. 41-44.

AFTER these terrible words, Jesus lingered for awhile about the Holy Place, as unwilling to leave it. Sitting down in the court where the Scribes and Pharisees had brought to Him the woman taken in adultery, St. John viii. 20, He watched the people casting their gifts into the Treasury. This Treasury was a box, originally placed in the Temple by the High Priest, Jehoiada, at the command of King Joash, to receive offerings for its repair and adornment. 2 Kings xii. 4-15. The multitudes who had come up to the Passover would, as a matter of course, make their offerings for the House of the Lord, freewill offerings, not taxes. And here, as in so many other matters, that great fault which ran through all the religious actions of the Pharisees, again reveals itself. Prayers, and fastings, and almsgiving, were done by them to be

seen of men. The rich men, as they cast their gifts into the Treasury, could not be content to give in secret. They must let it be seen that they cast in much.

Among these rich men came one poor widow. Poor as she was, she did not like to pass the alms-box. She would give what she could. We may imagine how scornfully those rich men would look at her, as she watched her opportunity, and dropped her humble offering, two little pieces of copper, among so much gold and silver. Many, in her circumstances, would give nothing. They would argue, 'What is this among so much? It will be of no account. The Temple will be none the stronger, none the fairer, for the farthing that I can give.' And so they would wrap their money in the napkin, or rather they would spend it on themselves.

But He who seeth all things and knoweth, the Refiner and Purifier of silver, the Maker-up of His jewels, Mal. iii. 3, 17, saw not only the gifts, but the circumstances, and the hearts of the givers. He knew the real value of those two little pieces of copper. The rich men had given much, enough, perhaps, to cause them the loss of one or two of their comforts or their pleasures. But this poor widow, little as her gift was, had given more. They had given of their abundance. She had given out of her poverty, out of her want; all that she had, even all her living.

And so He points out to the disciples once more the true measure of the Divine judgment; that, if the gift or the service be rendered with a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, not according to that he hath not. 2 Cor. viii. 12. To do what we can will win His favour, and make our offering acceptable in His sight, however little

it may be. What He chiefly requires is something of self-denial ; that we should give so as to miss it ; that our life should be in some little degree the harder by reason of our having something the less to spend on ourselves.

And so, again, He assures the poorest that their little gifts are known to Him, and prized ; that when our alms are humbly presented upon His Altar, the poor man's penny is as dear to Him as the rich man's pound, or, it may be, dearer ; that the child's simple flower brought from the distant field, or tended with loving care for the Festival, is as fair in His eyes, when twined in Cross or garland upon the Church's wall, as the storied window or the brodered Altar-cloth. Poor as thou art, thou mayest give, in love and faith. He knoweth what thy gift hath cost thee, and will reward accordingly.

But do not think, as some think, that every gift which is little may be called ' a widow's mite,' and may win the widow's praise. Thy mite thou mayest give, it is true, to every good work. But is it, like the widow's mite, all thy living ? Is it so much of thy living that thou wilt miss it ? If not, thou canst not, rightly, compare thy gift with hers. But give, rather, as making thyself poorer. And He will make thee rich.

The public ministry of Jesus, as a Teacher of the people, is ended now. Henceforth it is to His disciples alone that He speaks. And now He is about to sanctify Himself for His office as Priest, and for His work as Sacrifice, that He may make atonement even for His enemies, and draw by the power of His Cross and Passion those who will not be drawn by the power of His miracles and preaching.

PART XII

THE DISCOURSE ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

325. *The Enquiry of the Disciples.* St. Matt.
xxiv. 1-3.

THE Lord's ministry of preaching to the Jews is now ended, and He goes forth from the Temple for the last time. Going forth from it, never again to re-enter, He did indeed leave that house desolate, as He had said. The Apostles, remembering those words, can hardly believe that the ruin of city and of Temple can be so great. Or, perhaps, they would try to reverse the sentence, by once more pointing out the magnificence and beauty of the House of God they loved so well. A very natural feeling: To the pious Jew the Temple was far more than a place of worship. It was the very shrine of his religion. His faith, his worship, his very approach to God, were bound up in the Temple and its sacrifices. That was the great link between Heaven and earth, which all understood, and which all loved with a far sterner, mightier love than the Christian can feel for the noblest Cathedral in its massive beauty, or for the fair village Church, sanctified to him by the worship of generations of his forefathers. The Temple was, one might almost say, the religion of the Jew. Losing the one, he would lose the other.

Naturally, then, the disciples can hardly believe that He, who came not to destroy but to fulfil, looks forward to the desolation of this holy and beautiful House. Isa. lxiv. 11. Have they rightly understood Him? As He passes out of the sacred courts, turning towards the eastern gates of the city, they bid Him observe the enormous stones, the beauty and richness of the work, and the building even now going on. But while *His* love for the Temple, His own House, was infinitely greater than theirs, He saw not with their eyes. To Him the outward and visible magnificence was spoiled by the inward and spiritual foulness. The sentence was written irrevocably in the Book of God. A few years, and not one stone should be left upon another.

In this, as in so many other things, the Lord seeth not as man seeth. Are not His words true of those other Temples of His, the bodies and souls of men? We see one noble and fair, endowed with greatest gifts of nature and of mind. We look with admiration on one so fair, so great, so noble, so clever. Surely he must be dear to God. But all these things without Christ are nothing. If Christ has departed, that house is left desolate.

The disciples made no reply, for the present. The tidings are too heavy for them. With their Master they pass silently down the slope, across the brook Kedron and the valley of Jehoshaphat, and up the ascent of the Mount of Olives. There Jesus seated Himself, over against the Temple, as unwilling to lose sight of it. Here it was, or close by, that He had caught His first glimpse of the holy city, a few days before, as He made His triumphal procession from Bethany. Here the multitude had raised their cry of Hosanna. Here Jesus had wept. And here, forty years after, was

to be posted the strongest body of the besieging Roman army.

He is seated, over against the Temple, by Himself, it seems; gazing on the beloved but doomed city, already with foreboding eye seeing the destruction which was preparing. The disciples, silent hitherto, have brooded over His words. At last, the four most highly favoured ventured to put their question—‘When shall these things be; and what shall the sign be?’

But they have seen also a deeper meaning in His words. And they ask also, ‘What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?’

They understood not of His death and resurrection, still less of His ascension and sitting at the Father’s Right Hand. And yet in some dim way they believe already that He shall come to be their Judge; they believe that the destruction of Jerusalem is a type of the end of the world.

326. *The Signs and the Sufferings.* St. Matt. xxiv. 4-14.

HE answers them at once. But we cannot distinguish to which great event these signs belong, to the destruction of Jerusalem, or to His second coming, and the end of the world. He intended it should be so. He will have no man know of that Day and that Hour; only He would have us live in constant expectation of it.

And these are the signs. Many shall come in His Name, false Christs, Anti-Christ, deceiving many who would not acknowledge the true Christ. 2 Thess. ii. 3; 1 St. John ii. 18. First trouble in the Jewish nation; then trouble in the world; nation rising against nation; God Himself fighting

against all in those things which are especially God's, and in which man cannot fight against Him; famines and pestilences and earthquakes; fearful sights and great signs in the Heavens. These are only the beginning of sorrows, birth-pangs; all creation groaning and travailing in pain together towards the Regeneration, the new Creation of God. Rom. viii. 22. The disciples are not to look for His coming immediately. They, like their Master, must first suffer many things. The world must rise up against the Church. They who, instead of Jesus, have chosen Cæsar as their King and Barabbas as their friend, will combine with Barabbas to bring the disciples of the rejected Jesus before the successors of Cæsar and his officers. Jewish synagogue and council, Roman palace and judgment-seat, Annas and Caiaphas, Herod and Felix, should see the Christians brought to trial, imprisoned, chained, scourged, and slain. This shall be the testimony to both; to the disciples, that their Lord was true; to the world, that Christ had lived and died and risen again; a witness in this world, a witness at that Day, that none should plead they had not heard. For before the Lord's coming the Gospel must be preached to all nations, though preached to so many in vain. The disciples need not prepare their defence beforehand. The Spirit of God will give them a mouth and wisdom, which their adversaries shall not be able to resist. We know how exactly this was fulfilled to St. Stephen. Acts vi. 10. Faith, without carefulness, is to be the Christian's shield.

Then shall many be offended. They who confessed Jesus in the fair still weather, will faint before the storm. They will stumble and fall. The closest fleshly ties, the strongest affection, will fail and turn to bitter hatred, even to betraying their once loved

ones to a cruel death. Hatred from all—that is to be the lot of those who preach and practise a Gospel of love. But there is One whose love is wonderful, mighty to save. Though earthly persecution kill the body, not a hair of their head shall perish. The faithful martyr shall rise again in the perfect man. Spite of wild beast, and sword, and flame, the scattered dust shall come together, and in his flesh he shall see God. Ezek. xxxvii. 1-14.

Another trial! All Satan's violence may fail. He will not forget his old weapon of lying. Many false prophets shall come, with lying wonders. They who rejected the True Prophet shall believe these false ones. Disciples will fall away; and with Faith, Love will fail, the love of many. They will give up, as though it were no use striving.

Many! How often the word occurs! And always these many fighting against Christ, or departing from Him. Yes, as there were *many* choosing the gate of destruction. What, then, must we do? Possess our souls in the love of God and the patience of Christ. 2 Thess. iii. 5. Endure unto the end. For such shall be saved.

327. *The Destruction of Jerusalem.* St. Matt. xxiv.
15-28.

THE greater portion of this passage applies very distinctly to the destruction of Jerusalem. Yet it may be that every single verse will only have its entire fulfilment at the end of the world.

The disciples, their Lord tells them, shall live to see the Roman armies encamped around the city. Then shall its desolation be nigh. At the same time, and before it be too late to escape, the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the pro-

phet, shall be set up in the Holy Place. Mark how the Son of God seals with His Divine authority Book after Book of the Old Testament.

Daniel's prophecy, ch. ix. 27 ; xii. 11, had already received one fulfilment. About two hundred years before the birth of Christ, Antiochus Epiphanes, a heathen conqueror, set up upon the Altar of Jehovah the image of Jupiter, the Abomination of Desolation, the Idol desolating the sanctuary. 1 Maccabees i. 54. A second fulfilment was soon to be, when, on the appearance of the Roman armies, profane Jews, quarrelling among themselves, took possession of the Sanctuary, and again made the daily sacrifice to cease. A third fulfilment will be seen in some such desolating Abomination rising up against the Church of Christ, and by persecuting hands taking possession of her Sanctuaries, removing her Altars, and stopping her worship.

And this is the Lord's warning, 'Escape for thy life,' Gen. xix. 17, leaving all, flying into the farthest and loneliest places. The least delay, the least burden or bodily infirmity, the least hindrance in the shortness of days, or severity of weather, or obligation of religion, may lose the life. For this is to be tribulation such as the world never saw and never will see; tribulation so great, that if it were not speedily removed, the world would be as when the flood had destroyed all flesh. Gen. vii. 21-23. The disciples, therefore, were to pray that the severity of tribulation might be relaxed; and the promise is added, that for the sake of the Lord's elect those days should be shortened.

But, again the warning! This would be the opportunity, the harvest-time, for the false Christs and false prophets. Then shall they come with their miracles, worked by Beelzebub; zealous enough,

and cunning enough, having deceived themselves, to deceive many—to deceive, if possible, even the elect, those very chosen ones for whose sake the terrible days were shortened. ‘If possible;’ these are our Lord’s words, as given by two Evangelists. Not, if it *were* possible; as though the elect could not be deceived. He never gives any countenance to that presumptuous and dangerous doctrine that a man, once among the elect, is sure of final salvation. On the contrary, He says that He has elected twelve, and that one of them is a devil. St. John vi. 70. Therefore He warns these His elect ones before, that they may not be deceived, but may give diligence to make their calling and election sure. 2 St. Peter i. 10.

And then His words seem to confuse the Destruction of Jerusalem with His second coming in glory, suddenly as the lightning. Of which coming is He speaking? Of both. And as the Roman eagles will crowd around the fallen city, so will the Saints, who have crowded as eagles, Isa. xl. 31, around their Lord’s Body in the life-giving Sacramental Feast, be found gathered together around His Glorified Body in the Awful Day.

328. *The Coming of the Son of Man.* St. Matt. xxiv. 29-44.

AND now His words evidently carry us on to that second coming in glory to judgment. He speaks of signs in Heaven, and earth, and sea, in that Kingdom of God with which man’s hand cannot interfere. Immediately after that tribulation shall they come. Immediately; not in man’s calculation of time, but in God’s, to whom a thousand years are as one day. The whole dispensation under which we live is again and again called by

the holy writers, the last time. 1 Cor. x. 11. They who would not be contented with the miracles, and wonders, and signs of merciful power, by which Jesus approved Himself in His earthly ministry, Acts ii. 22, and required a sign from Heaven, shall then see fearful signs of avenging power, and last of all the Sign of the Son of Man Himself. It is supposed by many that this Sign will be the Cross, shining in the sky above the brightness of the Sun, Acts xxvi. 13; that sign which stands on our Churches, telling the world that they are dedicated to a Crucified Lord; which was signed upon our infant brow; with which all Christians in early times signed themselves often every day, in the Name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the holy and mighty Sign of which some Christians are now superstitiously ashamed and afraid. Then, after the Sign, they shall see Him whose Sign it is; they shall hear the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God gathering the saints to meet the Lord in the air as He cometh to judge the world. 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, they who, being earthy of the earth, had not made their citizenship in Heaven. Phil. iii. 20. Then shall the disciples lift up their heads and rejoice. For to them their Lord's advent will be redemption. Let them know, therefore, from these things, even as the tree knoweth when the summer approaches. The fulfilment shall be before this generation has passed away; a first fulfilment, in the destruction of the city before the death of those who have seen His miracles and rejected Him; a last fulfilment, in His coming in Majesty; which the generation of the children of God, Ps. lxxiii. 15, should, in spite of all tribulation, survive to welcome.

Lest they should inquire further, the Lord checks their curiosity, telling them that that day and hour are hidden in the secret counsels of the Father. He Himself, though all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him as God, yet in His human nature, as man, knoweth not. Suddenly shall that Day come, as the flood came upon the world; a sure and long warning, so long that none believed; worldly pomp and fleshly lusts freely indulged; all this in the midst of that great tribulation; the excess of luxury with the excess of suffering; the children of this world boasting that God neither cared for nor observed His children crying, 'O Lord, how long?' Then the coming of the Son of Man in sudden destruction and sudden redemption. No time then to repent. Men will be taken as they are found. Of two working together, one shall pass to Life, the other to Death eternal.

And again His words speak to us of continual watchfulness and preparation for His coming and calling for us in our own death. Watch and pray; be ye ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.

329. *The Prophecy fulfilled.* St. Luke xxi. 20-24; xix. 43, 44.

THE city encompassed with armies, a trench cast up about it; the Abomination of Desolation set up in the Holy Place; the disciples of Jesus, forewarned, fleeing to the mountains; tribulation, wrath, and distress falling upon the Jews to the uttermost; the city taken, the captives falling by the sword, and sold into slavery; the Holy Temple defiled, not one stone left upon another; Jerusalem,

the Vision of Peace, trodden under foot by the Gentiles; this is the picture before the Lord's eyes, and shewn by Him to His disciples. Let us see how the vision and the prophecy were fulfilled.

Soon after the ascension of Jesus, the Jews, always chafing under successive Roman rulers, were goaded into madness by the cruelty of their governors. Lawless men bound themselves into factions; false prophets and fanatics excited the people with their calls to revolt. All the indulgence and all the cruelty of the Roman rulers failed to quiet the rising spirit of insurrection. The time came when within the city fearful sights and great signs were seen and heard, and told from affrighted speaker to affrighted listener. A bright light within the Temple long after sunset; the great brazen gate opening of its own accord and scarcely closed by the efforts of many strong men; chariots and troops of warriors seen in the heavens all around the city; an earthquake; and a voice in the Temple crying, 'Let us go hence!' These things are recorded by Josephus the Jew, and Tacitus the Roman historian. Then the Christians, remembering their Lord's warning, fled into the mountains. Soon followed a general rebellion, and by sudden attacks the scattered Roman forces were cut to pieces. A large army was immediately brought against the revolted Jews; and after marching victoriously through Galilee and Samaria, it encamped upon the Mount of Olives over against the Temple, and soon encompassed the holy city on every side, hemming it in with a trench and bank, and afterwards by a wall, so that not a single person could escape.

Within, the rival factions forgot their mutual hatred for a little while, to fight against the common enemy. But only for a little while. The old strifes

broke out again. Armed men took possession of the Holy Place, making the daily sacrifice to cease, defiling and desolating it with all manner of abominations. Famine, pestilence, and mutual slaughter destroyed more than the weapons of the Romans. Now were accomplished all the predictions of Moses. Deut. xxviii. 45-68. Piece by piece the city was taken by the enemy. The Temple, having been turned into a fortress, fell in turn into their hands. Titus, their commander, had given strict orders that it should not be injured. But in the heat of action a burning brand was flung into it, and it was entirely consumed. A little longer, and the whole city was taken. It is said that more than one million Jews perished in the siege; that nearly a hundred thousand captives were tortured, thrown to wild beasts, sent to labour in mines, sold as slaves, given away at last because no man would buy them. The ground on which the Temple had stood was levelled. And when, three hundred years later, the apostate Emperor Julian endeavoured—in vain!—to rebuild the Temple, his workmen, it is said, broke away the very foundation, so that not one stone was left upon another.

So surely standeth the Word of Christ.

330. *The Faithful and Wise Servant.* St. Matt. xxiv. 45-51; St. Mark xiii. 34-37.

THUS the Jewish and the heathen historians set to their seal, unknowingly, that Christ is true. What is this to us Christians?

If the coming of the Son of Man in the destruction of His own city be so fearful, what will it be in His last coming to judge and punish a rebellious world! The Christians, forewarned then, fled with

their Bishop from the doomed city. The Christians, forewarned now, must flee in spirit from this present evil world, to Him who is their strong Rock, the Rock of Ages.

And are there not to us signs in the heaven above and in the earth beneath? We see false prophets pretending to find their damnable heresies in the Word of God. 2 St. Peter ii. 1. We see lawless withstanding of authority, so that ignorant and presumptuous men set themselves against the Church of Christ, her doctrines and her rulers. We see faith and love waxing cold; essential truths made of no account, necessary sacraments despised? If the Abomination of Desolation is not yet set up in the holy places, at any rate the desire is expressed and the attempt threatened to hand over our Churches to all sects indiscriminately, that they who deny the Lord Jesus Christ may preach from our pulpits and minister at our Altars. Instead of the daily sacrifice, the celebration of the Holy Mysteries once a month, once a quarter, has been too much our practice. What wonder, when the Atonement is denied, that His Sacrifice-for-ever in Heaven is denied also, that the pleading of that Sacrifice upon our earthly Altars should be made to cease! Have we no cause, watching the course of events in the Church and in the world, to expect a great tribulation to break out—He only knows when—against His Church; a personal Anti-Christ setting himself up as ruler of men's consciences and disposer of their lives, making himself God, in the Temple, that is, the Church of the living God? 2 Thess. ii. 3-12. May we not expect—nay, do we not see, the darkening of sun and moon, the casting down of powers in Church and in State, the bitter spirit of lawlessness and unbelief rampant

more and more ? His warnings, given so long ago, have never ceased to be fulfilled. The signs are there ; seen so often and for so long, that we scarcely look upon them as signs, either for judgment or for redemption. We account for them by natural causes. Nevertheless, the Son of God foretold them. And there they are.

He has taken His far journey, commanding His servants to watch. To all He speaks ; to the labourer who has but his own task as well as to the steward who has to assign to his fellow-servants their work and their meat.

Oh, joy to those who shall be found faithful, working and watching ! They shall be made rulers in His Kingdom according to their faithfulness and love. Oh, woe to those who have pleased themselves, negligent, unwatchful, unfaithful ! Upon them He shall come suddenly. To be cut asunder, to be cast out among the hypocrites, in the weeping and gnashing of teeth, that shall be their doom.

Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth ? A Christian death, without sin, without shame, and a good answer at Thy dreadful and fearful judgment seat, Vouchsafe, O Lord.

331. *The Ten Virgins.* St. Matt. xxv. 1-13.

WE have now three parables, illustrating the solemn teaching which has just been given. Marriage ceremonies in the East differed, and still differ, very much from ours. On the evening of the marriage-day the bridegroom, with his friends, the sons of the bridechamber, St. John iii. 29, St. Matt. ix. 15, goes to the house of the bride's father, and receiving her from his hands, leads her to

his own home. She, too, has her companions, virgins that be her fellows. Ps. xlv. 15. At some convenient place other young woman meet and join the procession, and enter with the rest to the marriage feast.

The Bridegroom is, of course, the Lord Jesus; the Bride is the Church, Rev. xix. 7-9; the ten Virgins, all who profess the service of Christ; not the openly unbelieving and profane, not the thoughtless and indifferent, but those who live and die acknowledging Him as their Lord, offering Him, in word at least, honour and service. All the ten had their lamps, the outward sign of the service they go to render. But for these lamps five only had taken oil, the pure and holy oil of spiritual grace which feeds the flame of good works shining forth before men and God.

Our Bridegroom tarries. And all slumber, in the sleep of death. Suddenly, at midnight, the awful hour, Exod. xii. 29, 30, the voice of the Archangel will waken them from their graves to go forth and meet the Bridegroom. The wise servants will be ready in a moment. They fell asleep full of good works and faith, and in the grace of the Lord Jesus. Acts ix. 36, 37. And their works follow them. Their lamps will be speedily trimmed, burning up brightly as the leading figures of the procession appear. Not so, unhappily, with the foolish ones. They have made no provision for the Resurrection. Their lamps are going out. And they have no oil, no good service to shew, no honour for the Bridegroom. Cannot their companions help them? Cannot the saints share a little of their merits? No. No man may deliver his brother, or make agreement unto God for him. Every man must bear his own burden, receive his own reward.

In vain will the foolish ask for help from the wise in that day. The best have none to give, nothing but advice to seek that which now there is no time to find. The Lord is come. They that are ready go in with Him. And the door is shut. In vain, then, the cry, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' One only answer, killing hope for ever; 'I know you not.' He knows His own; for they have known Him. The others He knows not. And they have never really known Him. For they have not kept His commandments. 1 St. John ii. 3.

Yet these foolish ones had never suspected that they should not be ready. They never thought that their oil would fall short. And, again; if the Bridegroom had come a little sooner, their oil might have lasted. Or with a little more space, after the awakening, they might have bought a fresh supply. But He came at the very moment that their fault discovered itself, and could not be repaired. Yet they had no real ground of complaint. The fault was all their own. A little more oil, so easily obtained beforehand, and they would have been safe.

Have we oil in our lamps? Shall we in that day be found wise, or foolish? admitted to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, or shut out, unknown, for ever?

332. *The Talents.* St. Matt. xxv. 14-30.

WATCHFULNESS for His coming is the Lord's lesson in the parable of the Ten Virgins; diligence His lesson in this. The parable of the Talents is like that of the Pounds. St. Luke xix. 11-28. But that they are two distinct parables is clear; that spoken to the multitudes, this to the disciples only; there ten pounds distributed among

ten, equally; here talents, a much larger sum, given—five, and two, and one—to three, according to the opportunities of each. Moreover, there we see a nobleman, going to receive a kingdom; for the hearers were expecting the Kingdom of God to be manifested immediately; here we have no thought of a kingdom, only of the master with his slaves. The parable of the Talents is spoken to the Apostles only; but it is true of us all, through all time. Christ our Master has gone into a far country, having given gifts unto men, unto every one of us. Eph. iv. 7-13; 1 St. Peter iv. 10. Yet not to all alike; for instance, all are not called to minister the Sacraments and to preach the Word. Some have received five talents, some two, some one only; differences of character, of rank, of cleverness, of opportunities. Every power of mind, every worldly circumstance, poverty as well as riches, sickness as well as health, is a talent.

Look round now. How are His servants employing His goods? Some are trading; gaining much, or gaining little. Some are not trading at all; they have buried their talents uselessly. Others are doing worse, and are wasting His goods. St Luke xvi. 1. In which of these classes are we? What are we doing for Christ, with those gifts which He has given us?

After a long time—time enough to gain much, and, if we have failed at first, to recover ourselves—the Lord will come and reckon with His servants. They who have gained will rejoice at His coming, and go forth to meet Him. ‘Lord, Thou deliveredst me five talents;’ so the first speaks, for all things come of Him; ‘behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.’ So comes the other, with two talents gained. And their reward is to rule over

five cities, and over two. Each is called to enter into the joy of his Lord.

Then comes the third, bringing back that which he had received, and no more. He had formed his opinion about his master—a hard man, cruel and grinding, making no allowance, extreme to mark what was done amiss. He could not trust his master. If the talent should be lost, his punishment would be too awful. He was afraid. Fear, without love or trust, was at the root of his conduct. There is the talent back again; he cannot be blamed, surely!

Startling, indeed, is the reply: 'Wicked and slothful servant!' where he had expected, 'Careful and prudent.' If that was his opinion of his master, he ought to have toiled with all his might. Or, he might have put the money out with some bolder and wiser trader, and so have gained interest for his master. His sentence is speedily pronounced. That which he had is taken from him. He is cast out into the outer darkness.

This parable is the more terrible because it shews the danger and the punishment of those who are most ready of all to excuse themselves and think themselves safe. The ignorant, the poor, these think that having received so little, they will be asked for little. True. But are they therefore excused from bringing that little? 'I am small and of no reputation; yet do I not forget Thy law.' Ps. cxix. 141.

Mark, too, the spirit which led to this sin, the slavish fear of God. Men will not go to Communion for fear of provoking God's wrath. They are afraid of using the one talent which He has given them. So they run into the certain sin of disobedience. They lose grace. And in this cowardly seeking for safety they destroy themselves.

333. *The Last Judgment.* St. Matt. xxv. 14-30.

THIS is sometimes called the parable of the Last Judgment, yet there is little of parable in it. The teaching is simple, and, on that account, the more awful. Jesus speaks as one who has made His claim good to the highest titles, to the supreme glory of King and Judge, Son of Man and Son of God. He shall sit on the Throne of His glory, calling all nations to judgment.

It is a description of the general judgment at the last Day. But, it seems, of one scene only of that awful Day. Sheep and goats were alike clean animals, offered in sacrifice, eaten by men. They, therefore, of whose judgment we are reading are believers, Christians, all of them; all, like the Virgins, like the Servants, looking for their Lord's approval.

The Lord, the good Shepherd, knoweth His own sheep. He separates them from the goats. And placing them on His right hand, He welcomes them as the Blessed of His Father. He bids them inherit the Kingdom prepared for them from all eternity, as those who have a right to it. They are sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ; made so in their Baptism, never having forfeited it. Their inheritance has been made sure to them by their service of love to Him. 'How?' they ask. They are surprised. He explains. Service to His poor is service done to Him.

For those on His left hand, the goats, He has no such loving greeting. They are accursed. Their sentence is to be cast into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Their sin has

been neglect of Him. 'How?' they ask. He explains. Neglect of His poor is neglect of Him. And these shall go into everlasting punishment. But the righteous into everlasting life.

There is much here affording matter for serious thought. These souls, these men rather—for in the resurrection soul and body are united again, in the perfect man—have been long since separated; the righteous with Abraham in Paradise, the sinners with Judas in his own place. Now all are called before Him. And here, for the sake of the lesson He would convey, He represents the sentence spoken to many at once. He shews us, again, by His manner of mention of their reward, that the Kingdom, Salvation, everlasting joy, has been prepared for us from the beginning by God. It is God's will that all men should be saved. The place of torment was prepared, not for men; no; for the devil and his angels. But if men will serve the devil here, how shall they complain if they are cast out of Christ's presence, to have their place with the devil in that other world!

Again, nothing is said here concerning faith; nothing of labours in the cause of the Gospel; nothing of stern self-denying strife with sin; nothing of prayer and public worship, and the use of the Sacraments; nothing of suffering and martyrdom. Why? Because faith is nothing without the keeping of the commandments; because there is no keeping of the commandments without love; because love is best shewn in the feeling heart and the aiding hand, after the example of Him who gave His Life for us. St. James i. 27. And so Love is the fulfilling of the Law.

334. *No Harm.* , St. Matt. xxv. 41-45.

IF we look at these works of charity as pleasing to Christ by reason of the faith and love which prompted them, we must infer that where works of charity are wanting, there faith and love are wanting also. And then we go on to infer that every life in which these works are wanting, can have no faith and love dwelling in it, can have done no acceptable service to its Saviour; but, on the contrary, has left Him to suffer hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, sickness and cruelty, without aiding Him. Of course we do not by nature see things in this light. Indeed, many would think this a very low and meagre rule for self-examination; many would think it altogether strange and unnecessary. The first would point to the much serving they had done for Jesus. They have been faithful in many works of devotion, they say. Good! Have they been faithful in loving alms-deeds? If not—without charity they are nothing. They have passed Jesus over. They have not done it unto Him.

But the others will take the more common argument. They to be lost for ever! Why, what harm have they done? What harm! That is not the question. What good have they done? The five foolish Virgins—what harm had they done? They were not ready with their lights quite in time. That was all. Yet they were shut out from the Marriage Supper for ever. Their Lord did not know them. Or the unprofitable servant—what harm had he done? None. He had kept the money safe. He had restored it in full amount, a large sum, every penny of it. Yet he is condemned as wicked and slothful, cast out into the outer dark-

ness, to weeping and gnashing of teeth. These on the left hand—what harm had they done? None, so far as we see. They are condemned because they have done no good. The good was not hard to do. They might have done good to their Lord in person. He was every day close to them. But they did it not. They never thought. They went on in their easy, self-seeking way, guarding against gross sins; thanking God they were not sinners like other men, that they had *done no harm*! Whereas all the while Jesus was weeping for them because they had *done no good*! So men live. So men die. So they will in hell lift up their eyes, being in torments.

When will men, Christian men, bethink them that to have *done no harm* is not safety but destruction? When will they remember that they have sworn to be Christ's faithful servants unto their life's end? What would they themselves think of a servant, who, after a day spent in idleness, work neglected, customers turned from the shop unserved, cattle left without food and water, business going to ruin, should ask for his wages as usual on the plea that he had *done no harm*? Thousands go out of the world self-satisfied, assured, and presumptuous, because they have *done no harm*. Thousands will be condemned at that Day, not because of presumptuous sins, but because they have been content with *no harm*. For 'no harm' means 'no good'; no faith, no love; a lamp without oil and extinguished, the talent returned unimproved; at worst, darkness instead of light, the good thing lent by the Master rusted and perished, the image of God trampled in the mire.

335. *Life and Death Eternal.* St. Matt. xxv. 46.

THE crowning joy in the thought of Life Eternal is that it has no end. Once to be within the pearly gates of the Heavenly City, and all its pleasures are ours for evermore. There will be the reward of our brief toil on earth ; no more striving against sin, no more temptation, no more anguish of body and distress of mind, no more wandering from the right way, no more falls, no more blindness, or weariness, or weakness. But all joy, which cannot be measured, or described, or imagined even ; a glory like unto His who is the very Glory Himself. This is the lot of them that shall attain. Safe ! And, for ever ! Who does not long for that lot to be his ? Who does not long that his warfare were accomplished, that this life eternal were already made his own ?

But if this *For-ever* be the crowning joy in our hope of eternal life, what of the *For-ever* which seals the misery of the lost ? Once to be condemned by the Just Judge, is to be delivered over to the tormentors, is to be bound hand and foot, and cast into the outer darkness and into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. There their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. There all hope is lost for evermore. This is the wages of sins committed and duties neglected : Heaven lost, and for ever ! hell gained, and for ever ! No more fellowship with the Saints, no more words of pity and encouragement, no more pleadings of the Holy Spirit in the heart, no more visions of a Saviour's love, no more drawings of the Father's compassion. But all misery of the whole being ; all good lost, all evil gained ; and—For ever !

The thought is so terrible that one would fain see an escape from it. 'Is it really so?' men ask, in awe. 'Can a merciful Creator, for the sins of a short life, condemn His creature to an eternity of punishment?'

We are not careful to answer this question as they would wish. The reply must be, not what man thinks, but what God has revealed. What are we that we can measure the awfulness of wilful sin against the love of God, and say what punishment is sufficient! His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. Isa. lv. 8. But this is clear beyond question:—as the life is everlasting, so is the punishment. As they that stand before the throne, rest not day and night praising Him, so they that are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Rev. xiv. 11; xx. 10; vii. 15. They are punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord. 2 Thess. i. 9.

Scripture has other statements concerning the awfulness of the punishment, as well as its ever-continuance. Better indeed were it for a man never to have been born, than to be lost for ever.

And we are not yet safe. God be thanked then that He has shewn us so clearly what the wages of sin are, and how they may be earned. For so He leadeth us to fear Him, and to repent in time, and to look to the cleansing Blood of the Lamb of God. So He leadeth us to gratitude for the pains of the Cross, and to the working out of our own salvation with fear and trembling. So He leadeth us to pray, from the heart,—'From all evil and mischief, from sin, from the crafts and assaults of the devil, from Thy wrath, and from everlasting damnation,—Good Lord deliver us.'

PART XIII.

THE LAST SUPPER.

3. *The Covenant for betraying Jesus.* St. Luke
xxii. 1-6.

WEDNESDAY in the week of the Passover ; time running on ; Jesus yet free to go in and out of Jerusalem ! The Chief Priests, and Scribes, and Elders have as yet found no safe means of arresting Him and now they hold a solemn meeting at the palace of the High Priest Caiaphas. Their evil counsels are not so secret but that He against whom they are plotting knows all. Jesus, as He finished His sayings to the disciples, warns them that after two days is the Feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified. *The Feast of the Passover !*—For then the true Lamb of God is to be sacrificed. Then that Flesh is to be given for the life of the world, that whoso eateth may have Eternal Life. Then that Blood of the New Covenant is to be shed, which seen upon the door of the house shall save from the sword of the destroying angel. *Is betrayed !*—The crime is plotted, resolved, the wish and intention accomplished. And the evil counsels of the rulers are known also to the subtle serpent. While they are in debate, plotting yet dreading to execute, seeking to slay the innocent, unwilling to strike on the Feast day, not for respect

for the day but for fear of the people, the devil, having marked his opportunity, has entered into Judas. So that Judas—without, as it appears, any previous communication with the rulers, but shrewdly guessing at their wishes—makes the first proposals to them, offering to sell his Master.

Do not these verses help us to guess at the undercurrents of crime? Such an one has fallen, so good, so pure, we thought, so unlikely to commit any such sin! What led to it? A willingness on his or her part, first. Then the opportunity. Then the temptation and the tempter. The devil, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour, knew the secrets of the guilty heart; he contrived the opportunity; he brought the tempter. Then the fall.

Should not this give us reason a thousand times to thank that loving Father who has not led us into temptation, but has delivered us from the evil? Have not we, too, often had our terrible moments of weakness, of real inclination to sin? The flesh, or the world, has had such power over us, that we were ready, perhaps desiring, to indulge our evil passion. What hindered? But we were hedged round. We found no opportunity, no sharer in the sin. We were ever under the eyes and the guardianship of loving friends, whom we could not defy, though we might have defied God. So we were saved from deadly sin. Not by ourselves. But by circumstances; that is, by God. The devil was not permitted to make the way of sin easy to us. Then followed the calmer hour. The bonds were broken. We came to ourselves. We perceived what we had been in will. We thought of what we might have been by this time in act. We repented in shame and bitterness, and in thankfulness too. God had

saved us. The devil had not entered into us. We had not fallen.

But with Judas the evil desire went on to the evil act. Lust and pride, the lust of covetousness and the hatred of reproof, brought forth sin, and sin was soon to bring forth death. The bargain was struck. Thirty pieces of silver is the price at which the Son of God is sold, the ransom for a slave gored by an ox. Exod. xxi. 32. From that moment Judas—it is an awful thought!—needs no tempter. From that moment he is watching his opportunity to betray Jesus.

337. *Preparation for the Passover.* St. Luke xxii.
7-13.

THROUGH the week of the Passover the Jews put away all leaven, Exod. xiii. 7; 1 Cor. v. 7, beginning from the morning of the day on which the Passover was slain, the fourteenth of the month Abib. This day was now come, the first day of unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. The Lord therefore sent two disciples, Peter and John, into Jerusalem to make ready. For in the holy city only might the Passover be kept; the Lamb was slain in the Temple, then eaten by the families at their homes.

In connection with this the enquiry arises, Did the Lord keep the Passover on the appointed day, with the rest of the Jews? Or did He eat a Passover of His own, a day too early, knowing that before the usual hour He would have suffered death? Or again, did He, of set purpose, fulfilling and setting aside the ancient rite, institute a new one, the true Passover of which the former was but a type? Each of these views has been maintained by learned

and pious scholars. We will here, following rather the words of the three earlier Gospels, suppose that Jesus ate the Paschal Lamb on the very day prescribed by the Law.

He Himself appears to have spent this day, corresponding with our Thursday, quite alone, probably in meditation and prayer upon the Mount of Olives. Peter and John, meanwhile, go into Jerusalem to execute His bidding; their errand is to borrow or hire a suitable room, and then to prepare the table. But He has already made their task easy; whether by direct arrangement, or by His secret knowledge of all things, is not told us. He gives them a sign, as when He had sent them to fetch the ass. St. Matt. xxi. 2, 3. All happens according to His word. They meet the man bearing his pitcher of water, and make their request,—‘The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?’

The Master! It is more than likely that this man was himself a secret disciple, willing and glad that his house should be honoured by the presence of Jesus. Probably he was rich; we may suppose so from the mention of the *large* room, furnished and prepared. It looks, too, as if he expected these honoured guests, and had provided all things for them. And the favour thus shewn him may have been the confirmation of his faith, and have brought him to an open and a bolder confession.

We may remark, to our own great profit, the Lord’s knowledge of this man’s movement—that he would be at such a place, meeting the disciples, with a pitcher of water in his hand. Wondrous proof, if we needed it, that His all-seeing eye is ever upon us, knowing long before our going out and our coming in; that He arranges our movements,

and combines them in the great work of His all-wise Providence. Yes, in the least as in the greatest things. He can so rule our wills and our ways as to make what we might call a chance meeting with friends in the humble work of our daily round end in our having Him as our guest, blessing our households, not indeed now with a visible presence, yet with a coming in to dwell and to abide which will hallow everything to our souls.

338. *Ceremonies of the Paschal Feast.* St. Luke
xxii. 11-18; Exod. xii. 1-28.

TO understand the last supper of Jesus and His disciples and the institution of the Holy Eucharist which followed, we need some knowledge of the customs of the Paschal Feast.

Though it was not at this time kept in all points like that first Passover in Egypt, few changes have taken place, even to the present day. On the fourteenth day of the month Abib or Nisan all traces of leaven were carefully cleared away out of the house, and every male of full age, except those who were unclean, was required to bring his offering to the Lord. At sunset the lamb was killed, as a sacrifice—a peace-offering and a thank-offering—by the priests in the Holy Place, the blood being sprinkled on the Altar. It was then roasted whole on a spit sometimes formed like a cross, not a bone of it being broken. The family, having fasted from mid-day, now took their place at the table, each provided with a small cup. Beginning with a grace of verses and responses, they drank the first cup of wine—the wine mingled always with water—called ‘the wine of sanctification,’ after which the master of the feast, generally the father, dipping

the bitter herbs in vinegar or other sauce, handed a portion to each. A cake of unleavened bread was then broken, a portion put aside, the rest eaten, with solemn reference to the 'bread of affliction in Egypt.' A second cup of wine being poured out, the youngest present asked—'What mean ye by this service?' *Exod. xii. 26*; to which all replied in explanation; *Deut. xxvi. 5*; and the first part of the Anthem known as the great Hallel was sung. *Ps. cxiii., cxiv.* The lamb was then eaten, a third and fourth cup of wine filled and blessed—'the cup of blessing,' *1 Cor. x. 16*—and the great Hallel concluded. *Ps. cxv.-cxviii.*

In all this we see a type of the great Sacrifice of Christ our Passover slain upon the Cross, given for our food in the Eucharistic Feast. The Passover is the slaying of a lamb, once in the year, as once for all; the unleavened bread is the pure and sincere heart; the bitter herbs are the sufferings of Christ and then the mortification of the Christian life; the blood sprinkled can signify nothing less than the precious Blood of Christ. The Passover of the Jews was a memorial of the past, a peace-offering of the present, an act of faith in the future, the coming Lamb of God. So the Passover is, like the Holy Eucharist, a commemoration, a sacrifice, an act of faith, as well as a feast.

Knowing these customs, we understand the sop dipped into the dish and given to Judas. We see, in the unleavened cake, the Bread which the Lord Jesus took, and blessed and brake, and gave to His disciples. We see, in the cup of blessing, the Cup which He took, after supper, and blessed, and gave to them. All this helps to shew how He fulfilled the Old Covenant and brought in the New; how He fulfilled the Passover of the Law, the last

supper, and then instituted the Sacrament and Feast of the Lord's Supper, the one quickly following upon the other, taking its place for ever, as the reality fulfils and does away with the type. Henceforward we keep our Passover, looking back upon the Lamb slain once upon the Cross and standing now upon the Heavenly Altar, looking forward for His coming again unto our salvation. Heb. ix. 28.

339. *Love and Desire of Jesus for the Passover.*

St. John xiii. 1 ; St. Luke xxii. 14-18.

LITTLE is said by St. John of the eating of the last Supper, nothing of the institution of the Holy Eucharist. Writing later than the other Evangelists he did not feel called upon to repeat that which they had described in full, and of which he had already spoken, clearly setting forth its doctrine in the Lord's own words, ch. vi., and which was set forth before their eyes, in word and action, at every celebration of the Liturgy. The beloved disciple tells us, as is his wont, more of the words of Jesus, and of the feelings in the Sacred Heart of the God-man. From him we learn how the Saviour, with all the weight of woe beginning to press upon Him in its heaviest agony, with the prospect of soon parting in bodily presence from the disciples and of entering into His glory, loved His own, as in the beginning, so now, and for evermore, even to the end.

It is but faintly that we can enter even into what we may call the human sorrows and cares of the Son of Mary. Into those sorrows and cares which He took upon Him by virtue of His being Son of God we cannot enter at all—as when in the agony in the garden His soul was exceeding sorrowful

even unto death. We can only stand afar off, wondering and adoring. But in all, through that mysterious agony, through the long hours on the Cross, He loved and thought upon His own. So also in His three days' stay in the resting-place of the departed. So in the day of His Resurrection, as when He sent His re-assuring message to Peter. Therefore we know certainly that now, having departed unto the Father, He yet loves His own which are in the world, and will love them unto the end.

He shews His love in His earnest desire to eat this Passover with His disciples before He suffers. One reason for this intense desire was, it seems, that now for the last time He should be among them as their friend and companion, eating and drinking with them. For His Death and Resurrection made a great change in their relations. He was anxious, too, to fulfil the Law of Moses, anxious to have all things done that He might the more speedily accomplish His Passion and His Cross. But most especially He desired it, we believe, that He might give to them, as the representatives of His Church, the Sacrament of the New Covenant, the Sacred Mysteries of His Death, the Sacrifice for ever, their continual Feast. Nowhere else is it told us that He desired anything with exceeding desire. *This* Passover He will eat now, and never more. For it shall be fulfilled, immediately, in the Kingdom of God. *That* cup He gives them, the wine mingled with water, the Cup of the old Covenant at the Supper, of which He will not drink again. That too shall be fulfilled, immediately, in the Kingdom of God. He is about to give them the Flesh of a better Lamb, the Lamb of God, a better Cup, even the Cup of the New Covenant in His

own Blood ; broken and shed for them already in everlasting purpose, in type ; soon to be in very deed broken and shed upon the Cross.

When the children of Israel entered into the promised land the Manna ceased. Josh. v. 10-12. So now that the disciples of Jesus are entering into the Kingdom, for them the old order ceases. Shadows flee away. The substance is made theirs, the True Manna, the Bread from Heaven.

340. *Washing the Disciples' Feet.* St. John xiii.
2-17.

BETWEEN the eating of the Old Passover and the institution of the New we have the washing of the disciples' feet. Supper was now begun—for such is the better rendering,—not yet finished. Already the devil had persuaded Judas to betray Jesus. This He knew. He knew also His own power and glory, that the Father had given all things into His hands, that He was come from God and was going to God. Yet He does not punish, or even expose, the ingratitude of the traitor. He does not arm Himself with His great power. He does not manifest His Divine greatness, and demand service and worship. No. He is among them as one that serveth.

Rising from supper, while they remain reclining on their couches, He lays aside His outer garment, girds Himself with the towel, like a slave, and pours water into a basin ; perhaps from that very pitcher which had been the sign to the two disciples in the hand of the owner of the house. Then He begins to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel. It was enough for Abraham and for Joseph to have the water fetched, Gen. xviii. 4 ;

- xliii. 24. But Jesus will make Himself as the lowest, performing the most menial office.

Every action has its counterpart in His mightier work. Thus had He put off the glory of His God-head. Thus had He taken on Him the nature of Abraham, and the form of a servant. Thus would He pour out the Blood and Water from His wounded side. Thus was His girdle of righteousness, Isa. xi. 5, thrown over us. Thus was His humility our exaltation and our example.

He cometh then to Simon Peter. To Judas first, it is thought, as inviting him to repentance, or setting a pattern of forgiveness. To Peter, afterwards, in what order we know not. He, amazed, remonstrates. Dost *Thou*, being such as *Thou* art, the Christ of God, wash the feet of *me*, being such as I am? Hereafter thou shalt understand, is the reply. Peter still holds back:—‘Never shalt Thou wash my feet.’ It is a reverent humility; but, if persevered in, it would deprive the soul of all part in its Lord. Therefore, understanding this, he yields, and more than yields. He would have a fuller and thorough washing, for hands and head. But this, he is told, is not needed. He that is washed thorough needs no more such thorough washing. Enough henceforth that he should wash his feet. A difficult saying this! We can only interpret it in connection with Baptism. He that is once thoroughly washed in the laver of the new birth, Titus iii. 5, needs not again such entire washing. Nevertheless, journeying through the world, he will defile his feet, and will often need the washings of absolution. The disciples had been made clean, all but Judas.

So, having washed the feet of all, He took His garments and sat down with them again. Even as He will, when He has purged away all sin, take

again the garments of His glory, and sit on His throne, giving them thrones beside Him. St. Luke xxii. 30. Then He teaches them. As He has done, so must they do. They know these things. Happy they if they do them!

341. *The Warnings of Judas.* St. Luke xxii. 21-30; St. John xiii. 18-22.

WAS Judas partaker of the Holy Sacrament? It is a disputed question. The story of the Last Supper presents infinite difficulty of arrangement. We can do no more than choose one order among the many.

Jesus having washed the disciples' feet, resumes His place at the table, and again speaks of His betrayal. But they, though wondering who the traitor may be, have yet so little fellowship with their Lord, that they renew the old contention which of them should be the greatest. Perhaps that mention of the Kingdom of God, St. Luke xxii. 16-18, had revived their ambitious and envious expectations. He rebukes them, pointing to the humble service which He had just rendered to them all. Yet, at the same time, He confirms the promise, St. Matthew xix. 28, that they, in reward for their faithfulness, shall be guests at His table, rulers and judges in His Kingdom. Here St. John's narrative seems to fit in with another warning for Judas, taken from the Psalms, xli. 9; spoken in pity for him, and in support of their faith, lest they should imagine that the Lord's great purposes were being secretly foiled by the deceit of evil spirits and evil men. All strife against Him, and against them, is but a strife against God, and must surely fail. And again, His spirit being troubled with thoughts

of the Passion, as well as with pity for the traitor, He tells them even more pointedly, 'One of *you* shall betray Me.' Conscious of their innocence, all but Judas, they exchange glances of grief and wonder and suspicion, one by one asking, 'Lord, is it I?' Not proudly resenting the words, but acknowledging the power of evil, the weakness of their own heart, and their Lord's insight into the future. They are anxious to know more certainly; Peter especially.

The beloved disciple is lying at Jesus' right hand, leaning on His bosom. As the only begotten, He that is in the bosom of the Father, St. John i. 18, could alone declare God to men, so the beloved disciple, leaning on His Saviour's bosom, was best able to enquire and declare the true nature and thoughts of the Son of God. To him Peter beckons, that he should ask. The answer is—The traitor is he to whom Jesus shall give the bread dipped into the dish. Then the sop is given to Judas. The sign, perhaps, is known only to Peter and John.

At some point in the conversation Judas has asked the same question as the others, 'Lord, is it I?' very probably at the moment the sop was given to him. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Up to this time the devil had only put it into his head to betray his Lord. The cherished thought was bad enough. The fiery dart had stuck fast. Yet it might have been pulled out, and the wound healed. All depended upon the use of grace meanwhile, the use of the time given, of the kindness, the warnings, and the reproofs of Jesus. But none of these availed, and at last the reproof, shewing him that his wickedness was known to Jesus and now revealed to his fellow-disciples, hardened him

to the speedy execution of his wickedness. Now Satan entered into him. He was a devil. In words of final rejection Jesus bids him, now that he has resolved, no longer delay. He then, having received the sop, went immediately out. And it was night.

342. *Love and Knowledge.* St. John xiii. 23-26.

SO used are we to the Scripture narrative that we often pass without remark the wonderful knowledge of secret things shewn by the sacred writers. In matters of worldly history the writers can seldom do more than guess at the inner workings, the motives and intentions, of the heart. One great charm in works of imagination is that the writers are free to describe in their own way the rise and play of thought and feeling. But this is not possible in real life. The Bible only, as written by the Spirit which searcheth all things, even the deep things of God, 1 Cor. ii. 10, can really tell us what men have thought and desired and schemed. There we have the thoughts of God even, as well as the thoughts of men, laid open to us. We trace the workings of love and long-suffering and grief, of provocation and anger, in the mind of the Most High, until the Divine patience is exhausted and the vials of His wrath are poured upon a guilty world. Step by step, too, we trace the sinner's downward course from good to evil, the penitent's recovery, by grace and sorrow, from evil to good.

Now mark this especially in this chapter. The beloved disciple—for his knowledge of his Lord's heart was attained through the instincts of love, surely, as well as by revelation—the beloved dis-

ciple shews the mind of Jesus looking forward to His departure to the Father, and His enduring love to His own; His contemplation of the almighty power which was His by the Father's gift, and His eternal union with the Father; His knowledge not only that He was to be betrayed, but who the traitor was, and how he had laid his plans; His knowledge of each heart indeed, whom He had chosen, as well as whom He was about to reject. St. John tells us, further, of the grief and distress which troubled the spirit of the Son of God. More than either of the other evangelists he gives us the key to the Lord's actions, by the mention of His foreknowledge.

In the same way he unveils to us the heart of Judas, tells us how the devil first put it into his heart to betray Jesus; and how, after the sop and the exposure of his guilt, Satan entered into him.

How should the Evangelist dare to write all this for us, except under the revelation and guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, or by the direct teaching of Jesus Himself? Yet something, we doubt not, was made known to him, through the insight and sympathy of love. The disciple whom Jesus loved, who leaned on His breast, who dared to ask what even Peter shrank from asking, must have known much of the heart of Jesus. A blessed thought for us! Learning we cannot all have. But *love* we may. And love shall unite us to our Saviour, shall teach us for ourselves, and make us better teachers of our brethren. The books of wise men may not be ours, but the contemplation of the Cross is a better book. Kneeling at the Altar, contemplating that Holy Mystery, discerning the Lord's Body, and receiving Christ into a heart purified and loving, thou wilt be even as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Leaning on His breast, thou wilt know; thou wilt dare to ask what thou knowest not. And there He will teach thee that which He hides from wiser than thou, because they have sought it only by wisdom, whereas thou hast sought it by love.

343. *Judas goes out: Peter is warned.* St. John
xiii. 27, 38.

NEARNESS to Jesus, so blessed to the beloved and loving disciple, was destruction to the unloving and self-seeking. The warning which should have saved Judas only hastened his ruin. The conviction that Jesus knew his wickedness brought him, not to penitence, but to stubbornness. The gift of the sop, instead of being reconciliation, was separation. The savour of life was changed into a savour of death. 2 Cor. ii. 16. Then, after the sop, the devil entered into Judas, filling him full of all iniquity, bringing him to destruction both of body and soul. The disciples understood not their Lord's rejection of him, 'That thou doest, do quickly.' For they had not all heard what had passed. But Judas understood. He went immediately out. And it was night.

Yes, night, indeed, to him! To go out from Jesus is night. For He is the true Light, and to depart out from Him is to pass into the outer darkness. Such is the downward course of the sinner. A little doubt, when Jesus speaks hard sayings, St. John vi. 64-70; a little grudging and covetousness, St. John xii. 6; a little false affection, and drawing near to Jesus to receive His gifts while the heart is plotting against Him; a little pride of spirit in resenting the warning and the exposure: and then, Satan's easy entrance and full possession, the be-

traying of Jesus, the crucifying the Son of God afresh ! The unbelief of Judas first showed itself when Jesus spoke of giving His Flesh to eat ; his wickedness was completed when he had taken the sop from his Lord's hands. Woe to us, especially, if we refuse to believe His plain words on that most Holy Mystery ! Woe again to us, if we dare to eat at His Table while we are cherishing the secret sin !

The departure of Judas is as the removal of the night from the Lord's heart. Now He hath put away that which offends and does iniquity ; now, for a little while, He enjoys a foretaste of the future purification of His Kingdom. St. Matt. xiii. 41. He is alone with friends who are all clean. For a little while He may have peace and gladness. Now the Son of Man is glorified. The glory of His Cross with its triumph, Col. ii. 15, of the Resurrection and Ascension, is so near at hand that He claims it as already His. He speaks not of suffering and shame, but of departure from them, bidding them a tender farewell. And, that they may follow Him securely, He shews them the more excellent way in the new commandment, even the way of love ; an old commandment, in that it enjoined love, Lev. xix. 18 ; a new commandment, in that it fixed a higher measure : ' As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' It was as enemies that He loved us ; loved us even to the laying down His life for us. When shall we attain to that same wondrous measure of love ?

Already, to the Jews, Jesus had spoken of His going away, going where they could not follow. St. John viii. 21, 22. A mysterious saying then, it was no less mysterious now. Peter cannot endure the thought. Why cannot he follow—follow now ? He

will lay down his life, if necessary. He speaks with all the energy of a burning love, a love which trusts in itself, not counting the cost.

And now the first warning is spoken, but he heeds it not.

344. *Peter warned a second Time.* St. Luke
xxii. 31-38.

HOLY writers suppose that Peter, thrice denying and thrice forgiven, was also thrice warned; the first warning recorded by St. John, the second by St. Luke. All too soon the calm which had settled upon that upper chamber is dispelled. The vision of glory is changed for loneliness and dishonour. Jesus foresees all the disciples forsaking Him, the one most eager now most faithless then. His first warning has been spoken, and His mind broods over it. He begins again, awakened—as we should say of a man—to all the danger which surrounds His beloved followers. To Peter, therefore, He speaks in second warning. Satan has asked to have them. So it was in old time. Satan asked for Job. For without the permission of the Most High the evil spirit is powerless. Job i. 6-12; ii. 1-7. In the Apostles, as in the Patriarch, the great strife shall be fought out; the Saviour's heel shall be bruised, as it were, by the Apostles' fall; but the Serpent's head shall be crushed in their restoration. Satan would sift them all as wheat, hoping to find them poor, thin, light grains. The Lord was praying, and would pray for all, St. John xvii. 9-11; especially for this one, as foremost in his confession of faith, St. Matt. xvi. 16, a champion and leader, the object of Satan's fiercest attack, and soon to fall most grievously. And He conveys the promise of

restoration in the charge to Peter to strengthen his brethren as soon as he himself is converted. Thus He teaches us that conversion is not a change once for all, but that the once converted may fall grievously, and need further conversion; teaching also that the fallen, being converted, may strengthen those who have fallen with him. Vain is the second warning! Peter persists in his protestations. Then the warning runs more awfully—the only occasion on which his Lord calls him by this name of Peter, *a stone*:—‘Thou shalt not only deny Me as thy Master; thou shalt deny that thou *knowest* Me, and that three times.’

The subject is apparently, not really, changed. Jesus reminds them of the time when He sent them forth without the commonest necessities of life. Then they had wanted for nothing. Now was coming a time of greater trial, when even His love and power should seem to fail them. The words that follow are very hard to understand. An ancient writer takes them as a sort of proverb: ‘Need enough at such a time for every means of defence, for purse and scrip and shoes, aye, and for a sword too, against the persecution which is at hand!’ In the face of the former teaching that the disciples should not resist evil, St. Matt. v. 39, we cannot take the words in any other sense. Indeed, what were twelve men and two swords against the many Roman soldiers and the Jewish multitude? And what need of such things to Him who had twelve legions of Angels at His call? But the Scriptures were in course of fulfilment; He was to be numbered with the transgressors.

Two swords are produced. It is enough, He observes. He does not pursue the subject. But we have taken, and still take, His meaning liter-

ally. In the blow struck by Peter, and in the Lord's rebuke, we observe how, even to the last, those who were nearest to Jesus mistook His meaning, and interpreted the words of Heaven as spoken of earthly things, until the Holy Spirit opened their eyes.

345. *The Institution of the Holy Eucharist.* St. Matt. xxvi. 26-29; 1 Cor. xi. 23-25.

AND, as they are eating, the old things vanish away, the Feast of the Old Covenant; and they receive in exchange the Feast of the New and better Covenant. What Jesus did and said is told us by three of the Evangelists and by St. Paul. Every action and every word has its meaning. The slight differences in the four accounts are but as fresh lights thrown upon the great act and word, so as to display their full power. The disciples, albeit He had spoken of His eager desire to eat that Passover with them, were not prepared for the institution of any new and great mystery. But there must have been something very awful and striking in their Lord's behaviour, when, drawing Himself apart from them, as it were, and above them, like a Priest ministering before a congregation, He took bread—one of the Passover cakes as yet untouched, and, with uplifted eyes, giving thanks, He blessed, and then brake it, and gave it to them with these words, so familiar, so precious to us, and yet so far above us: 'Take, eat. This is MY BODY which is given, broken, for you. This do, offer this sacrifice, unto a memorial, a commemoration, of Me.' They would wonder, not understanding. Yet their thoughts would, instinctively and with one accord, turn to His miracles of multiplying the few loaves

for the five thousand and the four thousand, to the taking bread, the blessing and giving thanks, the breaking and dividing so that all did eat and were filled. They would remember also His words spoken at Capernaum in connection with the miracle, which had so sorely tried their faith, that He was the Bread of Life, the living Bread, that His Flesh was Meat indeed. They understood not then. They cannot understand even now. They can only hear, and wonder, and believe. Still He has added to His former teaching. He has answered the question, 'How can this man give us His Flesh to eat?' For He has shewn them that He gives them His Flesh to eat under the form of Bread; *blessing* it first, as making it a gift from Heaven; *breaking* it, signifying that it is a sacrificed Body; *giving* it, as broken on their behalf, and now made to be their spiritual food and sustenance, for their life and the life of the world, that they may eat and be partakers of His Death.

In the same manner, also, after supper, with some short interval, He took the Cup—the Cup of grace and blessing drunk at the ending of the Passover Feast. This, too, He blessed with the giving of thanks. This likewise He gave to them, bidding them all drink thereof, saying—'This is MY BLOOD of the New Covenant,' or, 'This Cup is the New Covenant in MY BLOOD, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.'

And not only are they to eat and drink. They are to *do*, even as He has done; to take the bread and to bless it, and break it; to take the cup in like manner, to bless it with His words, in remembrance of Him; to do it ministerially as priests, before the Father, putting God in mind, pleading and shewing forth in perpetual memorial the Death

of the Son of God. They are to sacrifice, in this figure, the True Passover, and thereon to feed. Thus it was that Christ our Passover gave Himself to be a continual Sacrifice for us; not in a new death, but in ever-living Memorial; thus it is that His Church keeps the Feast for ever; the Sacrifice standing ever new, the Feast being always ready, until His coming again. 1 Cor. xi. 26.

346. *The Bread and Wine.* St. Luke xxii. 19, 20.

NOW was beginning the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ. Long ago, in one sense, it had been begun; inasmuch as the Incarnation and the Atonement were parts of the Mystery which was hid in God from the beginning of the world. Eph. iii. 9. It was begun in a further sense when the WORD was made flesh that He might do the Father's will and give Himself to be, first, a pattern of godly life, and then, a sacrifice for sin. It was completed only on the Cross when He said, 'It is finished,' and gave His life into the Father's hands. But now, in some sense, the Sacrifice of the Cross was begun; now at the table of the last supper the Son of God was taking hold of and tasting death, giving His Body, pouring out His Blood, saying—He who cannot lie!—'This is MY BODY which is being broken and given;' 'This is MY BLOOD which is being shed.'

We shall understand this the better if we go back to the ancient sacrifices.

The perfect and complete sacrifice of old was life offered to God by the shedding of blood. In some instances fruits of the earth were allowed, flour and wine especially, as the two best things. Melchizedek, king of Salem—that is, of peace—brought forth

bread and wine, and he was the Priest of the most high God. Gen. xiv. 18. A meat offering of fine flour with a drink offering of wine was one of the sacrifices and memorials ordained by God. Levit. xxiii. 13. These last, however, were never taken quite by themselves. They were offered either with the slain beast, or as representing it. This was the case among the heathen as well as among the Jews. The most perfect sacrifices combined both. The victim, devoted to death, was first offered by means of the bread and wine; that is, the bread was broken, the wine was poured over the head of the yet living animal. This done, the sacrifice was supposed to be already offered by man and accepted by the Deity. The presenting of the bread and wine was the presenting of the slain sacrifice. Hence it followed that those who were too poor to bring an ox or a lamb made their sacrifice by bread and wine. For four thousand years God had been training His whole family on earth in the laws and mysteries of sacrifice. And thus our blessed Lord, the One True High Priest, at the last supper, offered Himself in symbolical act, yet in real sacrifice, to the Father, before laying down His life upon the Cross. And, as with Jews and heathen Feast and Sacrifice went together, so Jesus made the table of supper to be also the Altar for His Sacrifice. He gave His Body in the bread. He poured out His Blood in the wine. The Institution of the Holy Eucharist was a real and perfect sacrifice, the beginning of the finished Sacrifice upon the Cross.

The Cross is the centre of the sacrifice of Christ. It shews us His actual dying. But that which He did before His very dying, His Priests do now. They shew forth the Lord's Death—His Body broken, His Blood shed—in perpetual Memorial.

347. *The Body and Blood of Christ.* St. Luke
xxii. 19, 20.

THOU shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues. Ps. xxxi. 20. Where should this Tabernacle be, where the fulfilment of this promise, if not at the Altar and the Table of our Lord? Yet here, above all places, the strife of tongues rings most angrily. In vain does Jesus say,—‘This is MY BODY;’ ‘This is MY BLOOD.’ Christians are not afraid to ask in unbelief and scorn,—‘How is this His Body and His Blood? How can He give us His Flesh to eat?’ They cannot discern their Lord’s Body. They see in the sacred Bread and Cup no more than the figure of a thing absent. This is the more sad, seeing that for the space of a thousand years the whole Church was of one heart and one mind upon these words; taking them as our Catechism teaches us to take them. The outward and visible signs are Bread and Wine. The inward and unseen part is the Body and Blood of Christ, verily and indeed given by the priest, taken and received by the faithful.

Do we enquire humbly, ‘How can these things be?’ The answer cometh not, save in the repetition of the words. Like other mysteries of godliness, the doctrine of this Holy Sacrament has two sides. That which thou seest is Bread, is Wine. Yet not common bread and wine. They are the Body and Blood of Christ. By His word a change has passed over them; not making them cease to be bread and wine, yet making them to be something above what they were before, even the Body and Blood of Christ. Strive as long as we may, we cannot undo the words of Jesus—‘This is MY BODY;’ ‘This is MY BLOOD.’ Explain as much as we may, we

cannot get beyond those words of St. Paul—'The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the BODY OF CHRIST? The Cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the BLOOD OF CHRIST? 1 Cor. x. 16. Explain away as much as we may, this yet remains, that the sin of unworthy receivers lies in their not discerning the Lord's Body. 1 Cor. xi. 29. And how should this be sin on their part, if His Body were not there?

This was the faith of the Church in her purest, tenderest, undivided times. This is the old faith, the Catholic faith, which we receive and confess. This is our faith in Articles, and Catechism, and Liturgy, and Homilies. However much our Reformers might guard against mere fleshly and gross views of the Holy Mystery by the words 'only in a heavenly and spiritual manner,' they still held to the words 'verily and indeed.' Otherwise they would never have written as they have 'of the due receiving of His Blessed Body and Blood under the form of Bread and Wine.' 'Thou hast received into thine own possession the everlasting verity, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Thou hast received His Body which was once broken, and His Blood which was shed for the remission of thy sins.' 'Look up with faith upon the Holy Body and Blood of thy God.' [*Book of Homilies.*]

Lord, I look up. I discern Thee. I believe. I adore. For Thou hast said it. This is indeed Thy Body, Thy Blood, Thy very Self.

348. *The Blood of the Covenant.* Heb. ix. 20.

SCRIPTURE is one from beginning to end. The more a man studies it, the more he feels this. To understand the New Testament we must know the Old. To understand the Epistle to the Hebrews

and the Book of the Revelation we must know the five Books of Moses. To understand the Holy Eucharist we must know something of the Sacrifices of the Old Covenant. For the Holy Eucharist is the summing up of all, the answering type of all, sin-offering, burnt-offering, peace-offering, thank-offering; the Cross being the central point, for the past and for the future, of all offerings and covenants between man and God.

The Blood of the Covenant! What then was a Covenant? And what was the Blood of the Covenant?

The ancient form of making a covenant was by slaying some animal, and pouring out its blood in testimony. Gen. xv. 17, 18; Jerem. xxxiv. 18, 19. Thus the passage in Hebrews, ix. 17, 'A testament is of force after men are dead,' is better translated, 'A covenant is of force over dead things.' As soon as the terms had been agreed upon and the blood of the sacrifice poured out, the covenant was established, and might not be broken by either party. This same power of establishing a covenant, and witnessing to it for ever, God gave to the blood of the slain beast under the old Dispensation. Exod. xxiv. 3-8. Further, the blood was not the pledge only, but, under the Divine order, the instrument, of forgiveness of sin, and of all redemption. Man, by sin transgressing God's perfect law, had lost eternal life. How was the guilt to be washed away, the sentence of death to be blotted out, the forfeited life to be redeemed? Only by the shedding, pouring out, and sprinkling of blood. The blood of the Passover had this power. Exod. xii. 23. So had the blood sprinkled by the High Priest before the mercy-seat. For otherwise that mercy-seat was not to be approached under pain of immediate death.

Lev. xvi. 2-14. So has the Blood of Christ, shed and sprinkled, power to cleanse the conscience from dead works, to redeem from eternal death. Heb. ix. 14.

More even than this. Not only does the Saviour complete His sacrifice by dying, triumphing thereby over the powers of evil, but, by dying, He is represented as winning His own resurrection by the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, Heb. xiii. 20; as winning His entrance into Heaven, our true High Priest, by His own Blood. Heb. ix. 12.

No wonder therefore that this expression—'Blood of the Covenant'—is found in the description of the ancient sacrifices, Exod. xxiv. 8; in the Prophets, Zech. ix. 11; and in the Epistles, Heb. ix. 20; x. 29; xiii. 20, as well as in the Gospel. For as the Old Covenant was sealed, not without blood, so must the New Covenant be sealed, but with the Blood of a better sacrifice. But that Blood must also be sprinkled upon our souls, for cleansing, and forgiveness, and reconciliation; must be drunk by us in partaking of the sacrifice. Here, in the Holy Communion, this Cup of the New Covenant in the Blood of Jesus is put to our lips. Here we drink in Communion of the Blood of Christ. Here that Blood, shed for the reconciliation of the world, is given, the effectual sign and seal of the New and everlasting Covenant, and conveys to each one who rightly, worthily, and by faith receives, all blessings which that Covenant assures.

349. *The Sacrifice.* 1 Cor. xi. 23, 24.

DO this in remembrance of Me. As often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death, till He come. Words lose their force by being translated. They get to be used in

a new sense, and the old meaning is forgotten, or denied. The words, *Do this*, have suffered this sad loss. They have been made of none effect by man's tradition. *Do this*, does not at all mean, *Eat this Bread*, and, *Drink this Cup*. The Lord had already given those commands, and needed not to repeat them. What He really did mean and command was—Do this; Offer this sacrifice of My Body and Blood, under the form of Bread and Wine, in memorial, or commemoration, of Me before God; Shew forth My Death before God, under this figure, in continual sacrifice until My coming again.

This same Greek word, here translated *Do*, is of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament in connection with keeping, or *doing*, the Passover. We find it also in the New Testament, St. Matt. xxvi. 18; Heb. xi. 28; St. Luke ii. 27. It is often translated, in our version, by *Sacrifice*, *Offer*, *Make offering*. Unfortunately, in this passage another English word is used, to our great misfortune. For thereby many have been led to deny the blessed truth, that the Holy Eucharist is indeed the Sacrifice of the Gospel.

Sacrifice under the Old Covenant had two parts, the slaying, and the offering. This is most distinctly shewn in the great yearly sacrifice of atonement. Lev. xvi. 12. After the goat and the bullock had been slain, the High Priest carried the blood into the Holy Place, there to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice upon the Mercy-seat, the very Presence and Throne of Jehovah. Even so Christ, our great High Priest, by His own Blood, entered into the Presence of God for us, there to present on the Mercy-seat which is in that Sanctuary the Blood of His everlasting Covenant, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Heb. ix. 11, 12. He abideth a

High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek. And being a Priest, He must needs have something to offer. Heb. viii. 1-3. Therefore He offers and presents Himself, the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, continually upon the Heavenly Altar. His atoning Sacrifice, offered on the Cross once for all in death, lives on, ever new, in Heaven. There He shews forth and pleads His Death, a Sacrifice-for-ever. That presenting and pleading of His Sacrifice in Heaven in no way repeats, or takes away from, His Sacrifice upon the Cross. They are not two Sacrifices, but one and the same, though in different times, and places, and modes of offering. And what He *does*, or offers, by Himself, in Heaven, that He *does*, or offers, by His priests on earth; He, in Heaven in His glorified Human Body, pierced and wounded for our sakes; they, on earth, under the sacramental forms of Bread and Wine. But He the One True Priest as well as the One True Sacrifice, in both, knitting all together into one. So we, obedient to His dying command, *do* this; so we offer Christ to the Father; that we may obtain all the benefits of His Passion.

This is the fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy, ch. i. 11; this is the new offering which, unknown to the Church of the Jews, was to be offered in every place; the pure offering of Bread and Wine, the Living Bread which cometh down from Heaven, the Fruit of the True Vine of God.

Thus did the Church of the Apostles receive the doctrine. Thus did they obey their Lord's command. Thus they had their share in the perpetual burnt-offering of the New Covenant, in the memorial, the pleading, of Christ's most precious Death, for the reconciliation of the world. And thus do we receive,

believe, and obey. Thus, in the oblation, in the breaking and pouring out of Bread and Wine, and in the speaking of the words of the great High Priest, we *do this* in remembrance of Him.

350. *The Communion.* St. Mark xiv. 22-24.

TAKE, eat; drink ye all of this. Here is the fulfilment of the words spoken by the Son of God at Capernaum. Not only was His Body to be broken, His Blood to be shed, for the forgiveness of sins, but His Body was to be given for our food, His Blood for our drink. Long had He kept them wondering how these things should be. Now, at last, as He is about to depart from them, He shews how they may eat His Flesh, and drink His Blood. And by this eating and drinking they, and we, have Eternal Life, the pledge and spring of a better resurrection.

Our thoughts turn back to the first cause of all that woe for which Jesus was now bringing the remedy. It was by the eating of the forbidden tree that sin entered into the world. The sin was disobedience. But it was by eating that our first parents received the poison into their whole nature. The bodily act wrought the spiritual ruin. Then the corrupted nature passed from parent to child by natural inheritance. In Adam all were dead. What more fitting than that the medicine of immortality should be made ours in the same way! What more fitting than that, by the way in which our first parents tasted Death, we, their children, should taste Life; that we should eat of the true Tree of Life, and so live for ever! Gen. iii. 22.

And so the Lord has ordered it. The Altar of the Christian Church is also a Table; the Sacrifice

is also a Feast; offered to God, then given back to men, that they may eat and live. It was ever thus under the Old Covenant, it was ever thus even in the heathen sacrifices; and so it is to this day. For men knew and acknowledged this awful meaning in the partaking of a sacrifice, this awful power, we may say, that the worshipper, by eating and drinking, made himself one with the being to whom the sacrifice was offered, as well as with all who partook of the same dish and the same cup. Yes, it seems that by the Divine will there was a real union made. For instance, when a man offered sacrifice to a false god, or to a demon, and then ate of the sacrifice, he made himself one with the thing sacrificed, and with the being to whom it was offered and by whom it was accepted. He offered himself to the demon, and received the demon's nature into himself. He had fellowship with devils. 1 Cor. x. 20. On the other hand, the Jew, by the sacrifices of the Tabernacle, after making atonement for his sin, offered himself to God, and then, partaking of the offering, had, even under the Law, communion and fellowship with God.

But we, Christians, are partakers of a better sacrifice, and of a closer communion. In this most Holy Sacrament we feed not upon type and symbol, but upon Christ Himself. Then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us. Then we are one with Christ and Christ with us. We are partakers of Christ, and in Him of the Divine Nature. Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Ghost. 1 St. John i. 3; 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Observe, now, the especial value to us of the law of ancient rites and ceremonies. By it, and only by it, we understand what the Feast upon the Sacrifice really is. We understand the real and awful

power of the blessed Communion of Christ's Body and Blood. Therefore we hunger and thirst the more for that Heavenly Food, thanking God for His unspeakable gift, longing to make more frequent and more worthy communions, that we, feeding upon Christ, may be very members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones, and being joined to our dear Lord, may be one spirit with Him for ever. 1 Cor. vi. 17.

351. *We have an Altar.* Heb. xiii. 10-13.

JESUS, our Great High Priest, in His one Sacrifice of Himself once for all offered, fulfilled all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. These may be classed roughly under the heads of Sin-offering, Burnt-offering, and Peace-offering. Neither of them was perfect in itself, even as a type. (1) The Sin-offering was wanted to take away sin, and to give the offerer the right to approach the Throne of Grace. It was not in itself acceptable service. The victim was slain, and the blood shed, within the Sanctuary, as propitiation, or satisfaction. But the flesh was either eaten by the Priests only, or burned without the city. (2) The Burnt-offering, which might not be offered till after the Sin-offering, was the true service and worship, the acceptable offering to God of a sweet-smelling savour. It was slain and offered in the Sanctuary, burnt by the sacred fire which had come down from Heaven and was never suffered to go out. In the broken pieces laid upon the Altar it signified the dedication of the whole life. And every portion was wholly consumed. No part was eaten. Nothing was given in these from God to man. (3) That was left to the Peace-offering, or Meat-offering, which was more especially

a Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, a Eucharist. In this the Altar of Sacrifice was also a Table of Communion. God and man partook of the same thing, part being burned and so given to God, part being eaten by the Priest, part by the offerer. By so eating, the Jew, having previously sanctified himself in the Sin-offering, by which he obtained liberty to offer acceptable service, and having dedicated himself in the whole Burnt-offering, now fed upon the food of God.

See how the Lamb of God gathered up into Himself these different sacrifices. He is the only true Sin-offering. By His Blood, and by it alone, we have boldness to enter into the holiest. Heb. x. 4, 19. He is the only true Burnt-offering, for His is the only perfect soul and body wholly devoted to the Father, consumed in life and death by the fire of Heavenly Love. Heb. x. 5-9. He is the only true Peace-offering, our Peace with the Father; and our spiritual Food and Sustenance in His Holy Sacrament. Eph. ii. 14.

But this last He could not be simply by His single act of dying on the Cross. Therefore His Sacrifice must be continued upon earth under signs and figures which should perpetuate its reality and effect. Therefore He has left us this Bread and this Cup, in which the Church shews forth His Death before the Father. And in this Altar which is also a Table, in this Table which is none the less an Altar, the Christian is favoured pre-eminently above the Jew. So that St. Paul writes plainly, 'We, Christians, have an Altar, whereof they who serve the Tabernacle, that is the Jews, have no right to eat.' Heb. xiii. 10. The Jew might not eat of Sin-offering or Burnt-offering. We may and do. First, we shew forth before the Father the one

Sin-offering for the sins of the whole world, the one Burnt-offering of sweet savour, the one Peace-offering of the service of praise and thanksgiving. We eat and drink of that Sin-offering to the forgiveness of our sins; of that Burnt-offering to our perfect union with Him. And then, being one with Him, we can offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice, in the entire devotion of ourselves to God.

352. *The Benefits of Communion.* St. John vi. 55.

IN these Holy Mysteries, under the outward and visible signs of Bread and Wine, our faith discerns the inward part or thing signified, the Body and Blood of Christ. Let us be sure, also, that we understand the inward and spiritual grace, and the benefits which we receive thereby.

Our Prayer-book sets these before us very simply and distinctly. The Body and Blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful. Therein we spiritually eat the Flesh of Christ and drink His Blood; we are fed with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the first benefit; how wonderful, how awful! In our Baptism we receive new life in Christ. In our Confirmation we receive the Holy Spirit in strengthening grace. In the Holy Communion we receive Christ Himself, that Flesh which is Meat indeed, that Blood which is Drink indeed, without which we have no life in us, with which we have Eternal Life. And so these benefits are made ours:

I. We receive cleansing and forgiveness. Therefore the Priest immediately before the consecration

of the bread and wine prays that we may so eat the Flesh of Christ and drink His Blood that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most precious Blood.

II. The Priest then goes on to pray that we may evermore dwell in Christ and Christ in us. This benefit we have been already taught by the exhortation to expect. For there we are told that by a worthy communion we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us. Truly is the Lord Jesus Emmanu-el, and more; God with us under the outward and visible signs, yea, God within us in His Holy Communion; making our poor sinful bodies, now cleansed, to be His Temple and His Dwelling-place.

III. And as the Communion is the *means* whereby we receive these marvellous benefits, so is it a *pledge to assure us thereof*. It is possible for us to receive benefits from God, or man, not knowing that we have received them. But Communion is an outward visible assurance. Therefore we are assured (1) of God's favour and goodness towards us; (2) that we are very members incorporate in the Mystical Body of His Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; and (3) that we are heirs through hope of His Everlasting Kingdom. We often hear of people longing for assurance, or boasting of assurance. He that eateth of this Bread need have no doubt. The assurance is his of all good things. He has the Son of God. Therefore he has Eternal Life. 1 St. John v. 12.

IV. Moreover, he has by this the strengthening and refreshing of his soul. Very weak we are against our spiritual enemies; very weary we are in our continual warfare and our long pilgrimage. In the strength of this Meat indeed, 1 Kings xix. 8,

we shall be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might; we shall run and not be weary, we shall walk and not faint. Isa. xl. 31.

V. Lastly, the Holy Communion is a pledge of the resurrection unto Life. This is the blessing pronounced to us as we eat and drink: 'The Body and Blood of Christ, given and shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto Everlasting Life.' For then He, the Life itself, dwells within us, making us and keeping us members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones. Eph. v. 30.'

The very eating and drinking of Christ's Flesh and Blood, union with Christ, mutual indwelling with Christ, this is the great *gift* of Communion. The assurance of God's favour and goodness, of our union with the whole Church, of our Heavenly inheritance, this is the *comfort* of Communion. The cleansing of soul and body, strengthening and refreshment of spirit, preservation of the whole man unto Eternal Life, pardon, holiness, strength, rest, immortality, these are the *blessed consequences* of Communion.

Lord, evermore give us this Bread, that we may eat, and live for ever.

353. *Communion with the whole Church.* 1 Cor. x. 17.

ONE most important view of this Sacrament and of the Christian's partaking of it is too often forgotten. We acknowledge it to be a Sacrifice, and a Feast upon a Sacrifice. We know that therein we feed upon Christ, that we are made one with Him and He with us. But, while we rejoice in communion with Him, we forget or undervalue the communion which we have with the whole

Church. We too seldom dwell upon the glad assurance given in the second thanksgiving after Communion, that we are members incorporate in the Mystical Body of God's Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people. And so we fail, in great measure, to perceive how all the discourse of Jesus in the upper chamber bears upon the Sacrament. In bidding the disciples love one another, He is only bidding them bring forth the fruit of their communion. For what is it? They have partaken of the same Bread and the same Cup. That, in all Eastern life, is a bond of friendship. The traveller in the desert, if the Arab have but tasted of his food, may put away all fear. The gift of a morsel of bread is a pledge of friendship and protection. Indeed, with ourselves, to eat or drink with another is an acknowledgment of goodwill continued, of ill-will appeased. These customs derive their life and force from the fact that the food thus shared becomes a part of the eaters, and so seems to bind the two into one. But this Bread of the Holy Sacrament is living and life-giving Food. While it becomes a part of the eater, it also makes the eater to become a part of itself, a part of Christ. It renews and sustains his oneness with all who have partaken of Christ's Sacramental Body, that is, with the whole Church, which is His Mystical Body. The worshipper in his Church, the sick man in his chamber, our brethren in the flesh in all parts of the world, our brethren who have gone before us in the faith and now rest in Christ, by partaking of this Bread, have partaken of Christ, are all one with Christ, one with each other, one Body; gathered up into Him, as the grains of corn, or the atoms of flour, are united into the one loaf. We are many; for the separate life of each cannot be merged or

lost. Yet we are but as the one loaf; so closely bound together as to be one thing, one bread, one body. Therefore, in thanksgiving after Communion, we pray that we and all God's whole Church of quick and dead may obtain remission of our sins and all other benefits of Christ's Passion.

There is a oneness, a communion of **Saints, in prayer and praise, in faith and hope and love.** But that is rather agreement than union. The real union with Christ, and therefore with each other, is ours by the Sacraments: given to us in Baptism, when, buried or planted into Christ, we were made members of His Body; sustained by the Holy Communion, whereby our life is renewed and refreshed by that one Bread, that one principle of life, which nourishes every soul as the sap of the Vine flows into the branches, which knits us together, as the dust of the flour is made one loaf. By the Holy Communion we are one with all Saints on earth and in Paradise, being all one in Christ Jesus. St. John xvii. 21.

354. *Jesus comforts the Disciples.* St. John
xiv. 1-7.

AT their Passover Feast the Jews were accustomed, between the Bread and the Cup, to pass some short time in devout conversation. It is supposed that, after giving the Sacrament of His Body to the disciples, Jesus spoke these words of comfort. And where should they find comfort, where shall we find it, if not at the Table of the Lord? Their hearts were troubled at the prospect of His death, at the thought of their own weakness, and danger, and possible desertion of Him. So would our hearts be troubled if we saw in that Feast only a memory

of a dear friend dead. But He helps their unbelief. He appeals to their faith in the Father, and bids them believe also in Him; again claiming to be equal with God, the object of faith. He knows that He is going to God; He has already told them that He is going, and that they cannot follow Him now. So He makes known to them one object of His going. In His Father's house are many abodes, room for redeemed men as well as for unfallen Angels, differing in their degrees of glory, that the highest Saints may be more than rewarded, that the lowest need not despair. If it had not been so, He would have told them; He would not have awakened groundless hopes. His very going away is to prepare a place for them. The time will come when He will return, and receive them to Himself, and not them only, but all who shall believe in His Name, that they may be with Him for ever. They know whither He is going, He says, and they know the way.

But how can He come and receive those who have passed away from this world by death? For to die is to be with Christ. This is another of His sayings which have a twofold fulfilment. Christ comes to each in death; He comes again at the end of the world, to gather His Saints to be with Him, perfect and for ever. They know that He goes to the Father, and by the way of Death.

Thomas, fearful and doubtful in his love, slow to receive the deep things of Christ, asks for fuller explanation. He speaks as if he were not alone in his perplexity: 'Nay, Lord, we know not.' Jesus replies that, for them, He is the Way, in which they may arrive at the Heavenly abode; the Truth by which their footsteps may be guided in the Way; the Life by which they may endure unto the end,

overcoming the last enemy, even Death. 1 Cor. xv. 26. Only so far as we are in Him, the Way, guided by Him the Truth, filled with Him who is the Life, can we, through Him, who is also the Door, reach the presence of the Father. Already He had told them that none could come to Him unless the Father should draw him, St. John vi. 44. Now He makes Himself the means of access to the Father. So He declares Himself to be one with the Father. So He completes the teaching, declaring that to know Him is to know the Father; that they, having known the Son, henceforth know the Father and have seen Him. Thus He gives comfort, only to prepare them for deeper doctrine. Truly they needed to be strengthened now by the Bread of Life, lest, under this new and wondrous revelation of doctrine, their faith should stagger and fail.

355. *Philip's Question.* St. John xiv. 8-14.

AS the earthly life of Jesus draws to its close, more and more wonderful are His words. 'Never man spake like this man,' was the awe-struck confession of His enemies. St. John vii. 46. How would they have listened had they heard His words with His disciples, more wondrous from the first than His public discourses; growing constantly more wondrous still as the disciples were able to bear, and His time drew to its close! Suddenly He flashes out upon them this hitherto unsuspected truth, that the knowledge of the Son gives knowledge of the Father; that they have, all unawares, known the Father and seen Him. 1 St. John ii. 23.

Philip seems to take the words rather as a promise, and asks for its fulfilment. Jesus reproves the

disciple for the dimness of his spiritual sight. They have been so long with Him, they have seen His works—works of Divine Power surpassing all the miracles of old; they have heard His words; they have even confessed Him to be Son of God; and yet they have not known Him, who He is. To have seen Christ is to have seen the Father. Let them believe now from His words, if they cannot believe it from His miracles, that He both speaks and works from God. Herein is revealed more of the mystery of the Godhead; to have seen the Son is to have seen the Father; for the Son is in the Father, and the Father is in the Son. None but the Son of God, equal with the Father and of one Substance with the Father, durst have spoken thus. Not as though the Father were the Son; or as though the Son were the Father, made known to the world in new revelation under mortal shape. But because the nature and substance of the Father is seen in the Divine Nature and Substance of Jesus. Whosoever knew Jesus in His Divine Nature knew and had seen the Father. The words of Jesus declare this truth. The works of Jesus confirm it.

Further confirmation still. Let them only believe on Jesus, on Him, into Him, as their Lord and their God, their hope and their worship, and they likewise shall do these same mighty works, and even greater ones, by reason of His going to the Father. For He, unseen and gone away, will yet be present by virtue of His Deity, present with them God and man, to work by His Church greater miracles than He had worked by the word of His lips and the touch of His Hand. Prayer in His Name shall overcome all difficulties. He will be the Almighty Worker, set in motion by the power of prayer, placing the forces of Heaven and the treasures of His

Spirit's grace at their disposal, administration, and control. For so shall the Father be glorified in the Son. These greater miracles they shall do; they shall speak with tongues; the shadow of Peter passing by shall heal; the handkerchief taken from the body of Paul shall make whole; they shall convert thousands of stumbling Jews and of self-confident Greeks. And yet not they, but the power of the Holy Ghost working in them. Not they, but Christ living in them; because He is gone to the Father. 'Whatsoever ye ask in My Name'—that shews that the power lay not in them—'I will do it'—that shews where their power did lie; that Jesus, glorified in Heaven, yet worked, and even to this day continues to work, in and through His ministers.

356. *The Comforter.* St. John xiv. 15-24.

SURELY it was in wonder that the disciples listened as their Lord continued speaking. A moment ago, and faith was everything; as they had believed in the Father, so are they to believe in Jesus; that faith should cure all trouble; that faith should perceive and know the Father in the Son. Now obedience is everything. Obedience is the test and proof of love. Only let them keep His commandments, and Jesus will win for them from the Father the gift of the other Comforter in His place; one who shall make His abode with them for ever; even the Spirit of Truth.

Hitherto Jesus Himself had been His disciples' Comforter, the Consolation of Israel, St Luke ii. 25, and their Advocate, comforting and making intercession for them. Now that He is about to depart from them, He promises to send this other Comforter, to do for them what He has done and will

still do ; and to abide with them for ever. The Son of God is teaching them of the Father and of the Holy Ghost.

It is certainly a new and fuller teaching. The most devout Saint under the Old Covenant, even while praying for the light and guidance of the Spirit of God, knew but little of Him. Now He is revealed to them as a Divine Person ; distinct from the Father and the Son, yet with the Father and the Son together to be worshipped and glorified, because together working for man's salvation. So the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity widens out in clearer and fuller light.

But this abiding comfort of the Spirit of Truth is not for all men. The world, lying in wickedness, in falsehood, and violence, and enmity with God, cannot receive Him. The world shall shortly lose the visible presence of Jesus, and will lie in deeper darkness. But they shall be comforted. They believing, loving, and obeying, shall see Jesus ; shall see Him again among them after His Resurrection ; shall see Him, after His Ascension, seated at the Father's Right Hand by that eye of faith which alone can really see ; and in His Eternal Life, they, being one with Him, shall live also. Then they shall realize the oneness of the Son with the Father, of the Church with her Lord. They shall know it. They shall love and be beloved. For the ascended and unseen Son of God shall make Himself to be seen in manifested presence and power.

Judas, the writer of the Epistle, asks for further information. How shall Jesus manifest Himself to the disciples and not unto the world ? Not yet can he understand more than the bodily presence of Christ, and this the world had been able to see. For

the Word was manifested in the Flesh, that the world might see, and have no excuse in its unbelief. How then was He to be manifested to the disciples only?

There is another manifestation of Christ than that made to the bodily eyes. The things of God, much more the presence and glories of the Son of God, are spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 14, by the eye of faith. Again, it is love, and obedience, and the hearing of faith, which receives this saving knowledge. The words of Jesus must be received as the words of the Father. And, being heard and received, they must also be kept.

357. *Comfort in the approaching Departure.* St. John xiv. 25-31.

EVERY word spoken now prepares the disciples for their Master's immediate departure. They shall see Him again; He has promised it. But when the glory of His finished work and Resurrection shall be on Him, He will not speak to them so freely. Then He will speak rather of the Order of His Church, and of their high office as His ambassadors to the world. Acts i. 3. A little while after that, and He will have ascended to the Father. Then He will no longer be their Teacher directly. But the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in the Name of the Son, shall be their Teacher. Yet not so much a Teacher of new doctrines, as a Remembrancer; bringing to their remembrance the things which Jesus has taught.

How truly and how fully was this promise kept, in their preaching, in their decision of difficult questions, in their writing down for future generations the Life and Sayings of Jesus, and in their

letters to the different Churches! Acts iv. 31; xv. 28; 1 Cor. vii. 40. Let us thank God that we have this sure word written for us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray that the same Holy Spirit may bring to our remembrance all needful doctrine, lest we, by forgetfulness, fall away.

Then for Himself He speaks; He, the true Peace, speaks and gives peace, such as the world, with all its lavish pleasures, its intoxicating and stupefying draughts, can never give; peace, though He is going away. Observe how He sustains them with the repeated assurance of His speedy return, and His continual presence; of His going to be with the Father. He appeals, too, to that unselfish love which is the only true love. Surely they will rejoice, even in losing Him; seeing that He is going to the Father. They have seen Him in His humility. Soon they will see Him in His agony. Let this thought turn their sorrow into joy, that by the Cross He is winning the Crown, that through the grave and gate of death He passes to the Father. They should rejoice, too, for their own sakes, seeing the human nature, the very Flesh of the man Jesus taken from a mortal mother, exalted to the Right Hand of God the Father.

‘For My Father is greater than I.’ Greater than Jesus in His human nature, that is. For of Himself in His *Divine* nature, He had said, ‘I and My Father are one.’ Ch. x. 30. Oh, joy indeed to us poor creatures of flesh and blood, that Christ, inferior to the Father as touching His manhood, is in that same manhood exalted to the Father’s throne, never laying it aside; but ever one Christ, in His Divine nature equal with the Father!

He tells them this beforehand, the glory and the crown. Not as though they understood it now;

but that when they see His words fulfilled they may understand and believe. Indeed this seems to be the purpose of most prophecy, to excite to watchfulness, and to convince when the fulfilment is given. And now He will say but little more. His great agony, His great conflict, is at hand. The Prince of this world, which cannot receive the Spirit of God, cometh, as he had come before, to tempt and to torment. He will find nothing in the Son of God by which to win a victory; no spot of sin, no taint of evil habit, no bitter remembrance. Nevertheless Jesus bears the agony, because it is the Father's will, and that the world may see His love to the Father by His willing obedience.

358. *The Vine and the Branches.* St. John xv. 1-11.

AND now He calls them to arise from the couch, and to depart. Some suppose that it was here He took the Cup of Blessing, the Cup of the New Covenant in His Blood, and gave them all to drink of it. If so, His words would be an invitation to complete the Passover Feast in haste, as wayfarers waiting the summons to their journey. Exod. xii. 11.

As, having given them the Sacrament of His Body, He taught them of His indwelling abode within them, together with the Father and the Spirit, ch. xiv. 17, 23; so now, giving them the Sacrament of His Blood, He declares Himself to be the True Vine, as He is the True Bread. In the Old Testament Israel was the Vine of God; Ps. lxxx. 8; Isa. v. 1-7; but a vine which failed and brought forth only wild grapes. Jesus is the True Israel of God, the Head of the people, therefore the True Vine, the parent and life-giving stock from whom the branches have their strength and fruit.

The Father is the Husbandman, the tiller of the soil, the giver of rain and sunshine, the pruner of the branches. These branches are the disciples; not the twelve only, but all who by Baptism are planted and grafted into Christ. Rom. vi. 5; xi. 16-22.

But there are branches in every tree, branches even in the True Vine, which bear no fruit. What has the Husbandman for these? If the pruning knife of affliction, the removal of worldly cares and fleshly pleasures, suffice not, then that branch must be cut away, even as Judas was just now cut away. And the branches that bear fruit, shall they escape? No; for them, too, the pruning knife must bring its sharp aid, lopping off that which is superfluous, the shadowing leaves and too luxuriant shoots, that they may bring forth more fruit. Thus the Husbandman cleanses the branch. And thus, by the Word of Jesus, the disciples have been cleansed.

But to be a branch in the vine now is not enough, to bring forth fruit now is not enough. The branch must abide in the vine, the Christian must abide in Christ. Only so can the branch and the disciple bear much fruit. Apart from the Vine we can do nothing; branches without fruit are fit only to be burned. But they that abide in Christ, they shall ask for the strength to bear fruit, and shall not ask in vain. They shall bear fruit, and much fruit. And their fruit shall be to the glory of Him who is above all glory. For so the most High accepts the service of His people. So, bearing much fruit, they shall be indeed disciples of Jesus, owned by Him; loved by Him as He is loved by the Father; abiding in His love by obedience, even as He by obedience abideth in His Father's love. And in proportion to their fruit so is their joy, Christ's joy in them, abiding even unto fulness.

What then is abiding in Christ? Abiding in Him is faith, is love, is obedience. And where shall these three be found, if not in doing, eating, and drinking, according to His last command? There faith discerns His Body and His Blood. There love hungers and thirsts till the soul be filled; there obedience does as He has said. There we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; we abide in Him and He in us; we drink life from the very Life itself to the bringing forth of much fruit.

359. *Obedience the Proof of Love.* St. John xv.
10-12.

THE first thought of the soul awakened from its death of sin, and terrified at its danger of eternal damnation is, 'What must I do to be saved?' To this question St. Paul gives the answer: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Acts xvi. 30, 31. But this answer must be interpreted with the Lord's own words to the rich young ruler. St. Matt. xix. 17. Repentance and faith are but among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Heb. vi. 1. The soul, passing from fear to love, would not have it otherwise; for it could not live upon a dead faith. It loves, and desires assurance that it is beloved. And then, distrustful of itself, it fears lest its own love be imperfect and unworthy of the name of love. Of *His* love it cannot doubt, if it have any faith at all. That love is declared to all in the Cross. It is assured to us in the Sacraments, those effectual signs of grace and God's goodwill towards us. Thou hast been baptized. Then thou art God's child, and He loves thee. Thou hast received the Holy Communion. Then thou hast eaten the very

Body and drunk the very Blood of thy Lord. What greater proof of His love couldst thou require? It is of thyself, then, that thou askest, how thou mayest know that thou lovest Him.

How shall we measure love? Some would measure it by their feelings. They are fully persuaded in their own mind; they have joy and peace in believing; they long for Christ; in the thought of soon meeting Him they could triumph over the very sharpest agonies of death. Words and feelings these! They may be well founded, and endure through stern and long trial. But they may, too, fail. There is only one standard which can safely be trusted, the standard of obedience. 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.' There is the rule given by the Lord Himself, and declared to be the proof of our love for Him. 'He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, He it is that loveth Me.' St. John xiv. 15, 21, 23. 'This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.' So writes the beloved disciple in his first epistle, in which, again and again, he speaks of these same blessings and rewards of love which His Master had promised in the chamber of the Blessed Sacrament. All the love which thou canst desire from thy Lord, fellowship with Him and His people, cleansing by His Blood, abiding in Him, prayer heard and answered, the dwelling in Him and the being dwelt in by Him, the assurance that we love His children, that we ourselves, having been made His children, continue so, all this is pledged to thee if thou love Him. And thou shalt know whether thou lovest Him or no, according to thy keeping of His commandments. Little obedience, little love.

For it is by obedience that the Son of God has shewn the world that He loves the Father, and

abides in the Father's love. The obedience of the creature to the Creator is a bond of love and union, a likeness, though distant, to the Divine love and oneness of will in which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are bound eternally together. This He has told them, that they, loving and proving their love by the keeping of His commandments, might be children in whom He is well pleased, in whom His joy and delight may remain; that they, assured of His good pleasure and love, may rejoice, and, in His promised abiding Presence, find a very fulness of joy. Ps. xvi. 11.

360. *Friends, not Slaves.* St. John xv. 11-17.

AND this is the first and greatest of His commandments; if they love Him, let them love one another. And in what degree? Even as He has loved them; no less. He loved us for our sakes, not for His own; out of pure compassion; loved us even unto the death. So must our love for the brethren be pure of all self-seeking; ready to suffer—ready, if need be, to die, for our friends.

But, again, who are friends? Those whom Jesus calls His friends are the keepers of His commandments. These He calls no longer servants or slaves. For slaves are kept under by a yoke of laws and ordinances, and required, under fear of punishment, to obey commandments which they cannot understand. Whereas the friend is asked, rather than commanded, to do a service; he understands the wishes and motives and purposes of the friend to whom he ministers. The servant, too, being bound to work, toils in the field, and, his field-work over, comes in to prepare his master's meal, receiving no thanks for his pains. St. Luke xvii. 7-9. It is a

service by compulsion, ungraciously rendered, unthankfully received. Not so will Jesus deal with the disciples. He calls them friends now; they know, or soon will know, all that their Lord doeth; for all that He has heard of His Father He hath made known unto them. Moreover, the servant abideth not in the house for ever; he may be sold or sent away. But He is going to prepare an abode for His disciples. For they have been made free; they are friends, they are sons—St. John viii. 35, 36—conscious still of their own unworthiness, of being unprofitable servants; in their own consciences worthy of no better place than among the hired servants; yet, in His heart, taken by the hand as friends, and brothers, and sons.

Not by their merit, but by His free choice, are they thus exalted. They have not even the merit of having recognised Him, and sought Him out, and attached themselves unto Him. All is of His free mercy. It is He who has called, and chosen, and elected them; He who has ordained them that they should go forth preachers of His Word, ambassadors of His will, as knowing what their Lord doeth, stewards of His Mysteries. And doers also of His will in all things, to the bringing forth of fruit, much fruit, fruit that abides.

Here again we have in an Epistle the echo of these words. Just now we heard Jude asking how the Lord would manifest Himself to them and not unto the world. He too, like John, was an attentive listener. For him too, as for John, the Holy Comforter brought these words to his remembrance. And as John wrote in his Epistles pre-eminently of love, and of keeping the commandments, so does Jude write of unfruitful branches, of trees whose fruit abideth not, but withereth, without

fruit, twice dead; sensual, not having the Spirit, not keeping themselves in the love of God. St. Jude 12, 19, 21.

This obedience and abiding is to be the strength of prayer in His Name. Because it is union with, and abiding in, Christ. To such the Father will give whatsoever they ask, seeing that every gift will be turned to profit. Therefore once more, and not once more but many times, He charges them that they love one another.

361. *Persecution.* St. John xv. 18; xvi. 4.

LOVE is to be the bond of union among the disciples, as well as the fulfilling of the law. The more need for it among those who love Christ, seeing that they shall receive none from the world. With that world the Lord had been striving through His life of patience and ministry. Yet it would not receive Him. It hated Him. He had spoken to it His last words, had shed over it His last tears. Soon its hatred would nail Him to the Cross. The disciples at His call have renounced the world. He prepares them, therefore, to expect no better treatment than He has received. Reverence or persecution, as they have followed the Master, so will they follow the disciple. And persecution shall be not simply on account of their sayings and doings, but by reason of the Name they bear. The world, knowing not the Father, cannot receive the Son.

The world knows not. But ignorance is no excuse. For it might have known. How often do we pity the ignorant; and rightly! How often do we make excuse for ignorance, as if it cleared from all blame; but wrongly! There is an ignorance which has had

no means of learning. That God will punish with few stripes. There is an ignorance which might have known, and refused ; and that ignorance, being wilful sin, shall be punished with many stripes. The Jews, if they had never seen nor heard of Jesus, might have had excuse. But, having seen Him, in His words and works, a greater far than Moses, and rejecting Him, they had no cloke for their sin. So with us. The knowledge of God is within our reach. If we choose to remain ignorant, God will judge us as those who have refused instruction, Prov. i. 24, who have closed their eyes to clearest evidence, just as if we had known as well as hated Him and His dear Son. Oh, most terrible hatred, sealing the damnation of the hater, that, in utter contempt, not caring to learn of the love of Jesus, men have hated Him without a cause !

One more witness is yet to come, the Comforter, the Spirit of God. He shall testify to the disciples, and, in the disciples, to the world ; that they, having been with Jesus from the beginning, may with great power bear witness to all that He has done and taught. But His evidence the world shall likewise reject ; and the disciples must be prepared for this, lest their faith fail them, and they stumble and fall. Excommunication, persecution, death, these shall be their lot. And the bitterest drop in their cup shall be that they will be condemned as blasphemers and enemies of God, while their persecutors count them but as sheep appointed to be slain, a sacrifice to the indignation of an insulted God. Rom. viii. 35, 36.

Such, indeed, was the deplorable blindness of Jewish and of heathen persecutors. In the Name of religion and of God, knowing neither God nor

Christ, they persecuted the Church. Acts xxvi. 9-11. This is the Kingdom which the disciples of Jesus must look forward to. They had asked what reward they were to have for forsaking all and following Him. When they asked that question they were too weak to bear the knowledge of the future. Enough then that He was with them, strengthening them day by day. Now that He is going from them, they may, and must, hear it; lest, in the day of tribulation, they be taken unawares, and faint, and fail.

362. *The Work of the Comforter.* St. John xvi. 5-15.

NOW He is going **away**; that is the main idea which He would impress upon them. Peter, in expectation of His death, had just now asked, 'Whither goest Thou?' ch. xiii. 36; but not so earnestly as to wait for an answer. Excess of sorrow had silenced their curiosity. And He is going to the Father who had sent Him. Strange as they may think it, it is as much for their good as for His own glory.

This of all things appears to us unreasonable. Good for the disciples, good for us, that the Saviour and Lord should go away! Oh, if only we were able to find Him, to see Him, to touch Him, to speak with Him! That is the first thought of the natural heart. St. John xx. 17. But, with a little reflection, we begin to understand. Were the Lord on earth still, men would crave only for His visible presence; and knowing Him only after the flesh, would forget that He filleth all things. Now we know that He, being ascended, is not to be sought in Judæa, but that He is with us and within us always; with His Church and every member of it.

Moreover, the immediate fruit of His departure was the coming of the Comforter. The Holy Spirit, always the Comforter, is at this time especially to be desired under this name. Jesus, departing, will convince the world; of sin, in its refusing to believe in Jesus, refusing to believe God; of righteousness, that is, of the righteousness of Jesus and of the righteousness which is by faith in Him, because He has been accepted by the Father; and of judgment, because the prince of this world, that is, Satan, has been judged, and therefore his servants shall surely be judged and punished with him. Those things which Jesus, out of pity for their weakness, has not yet told them, shall then be told them by the Spirit. He is the Spirit of Truth, and so rightly named the Comforter; for deceitfulness is no true comfort, but a blindness from the evil spirit. St. John viii. 44. He shall guide them into all the truth. There shall be neither error nor withholding in His teaching. He shall speak not as a man would speak, of His own knowledge only. He shall speak of things known from everlasting by the Father and by Christ. And of the future as well as of the past.

He, the Spirit. So the Spirit is shewn to us as a Divine Person, not merely a grace or a spiritual light and help; sent by the Son, proceeding from the Father. He shall glorify Jesus, partly by revealing to the Apostles the true nature and work of the Son of God, partly by filling them with the spiritual gifts and graces which His ascension was to win; Eph. iv. 7-16; partly by revealing the Son of God to the world by the wisdom and power of the Apostles. There shall be no limit to His revelation except their capacity to receive it. He shall receive the things of Christ; and as a messenger

and ambassador shall shew them to the disciples. The oneness, and yet the separateness, of the Blessed Three are here wonderfully shewn. The things of the Son are in the Father's holding. Yet the Spirit is free to take thereof and to reveal them to men. The three Persons are distinct; yet one and the same God, working in Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification, for the salvation of all mankind.

363. *Sorrow and Joy.* St. John xvi. 16-22.

THESE sayings were too hard for them. They listen, wonderingly. Then He speaks again of His own doings. A little while, and they shall not see Him among them; for He will be among the dead; again a little while, and they shall see Him re-appear, the risen Jesus. Again a little while, and they shall not see Him; and then a little while, and they shall see Him re-appearing in the glory of the Father. Afraid to ask His meaning—and throughout this evening they seem to be filled with a greater awe of Him than they had shewed before, as if He were, in spite of His washing their feet, more than ever Master and Lord, the Priest of the New Covenant, the Giver of the New Commandment—they question among themselves. They cannot tell what He saith. He only can give light and comfort, and this He quickly does. Sorrow is to be their lot; the world shall rejoice over them. But not for ever. His blessing upon the mourners shall be fulfilled to them. Their sorrow shall be turned into joy.

That, indeed, is the Divine law for all blessing bestowed upon this sinful world of ours. The joy must be wrought out as by labour and travail, won

through suffering, even though it be His free gift. The law of the natural birth extends into the spiritual life also. The unruffled prosperity, the eating and drinking and merriment, the purple and fine linen and sumptuous fare, the first places and the salutations in the markets, these are the world's good things. The disciple of Jesus fears them lest they prove to him evil things. Therefore he will deny himself, and take up his Cross, and in all things approve himself the servant of a suffering Lord. 2 Cor. vi. 4-10; xi. 23-28. He is content to be sorrowful; and, being sorrowful, he knows how to be always rejoicing, and even to glory in tribulation. Rom. v. 3-5. That is God's law for our entrance into the world; for all great deeds of daring, of learning, and of love. That is God's law for our redemption; the new birth of the world could be won only by the sorrows of the Man of Sorrows. Only by the Cross could He win our salvation and His own glory. That is God's law for the perfection of every soul—through much tribulation. That is His law for our final salvation—by death we enter into life. That is His law for His Church. She shall be persecuted, afflicted, tempest-tossed; her children slain in her streets, herself driven into the wilderness; and the world shall rejoice and make merry over her. Rev. xi. 1-10. Saints from beneath the Golden Altar shall echo the cry of Saints on earth, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' Rev. vi. 10. Yes, suffering and sorrow are the furnace in which the soul is refined until it reflects the image of the Refiner. Mal. iii. 3.

But this shall not be for ever. The slain and buried Jesus came back to them. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. The ascended Jesus, the long-expected Bridegroom,

shall return to His Church. Then shall she rejoice indeed over enemies vanquished, labours ended, sorrows past; joy unspeakable and full of glory hers for evermore.

364. *Prayer in the Name of Jesus.* St. John
xvi. 23.

ACCESS to the Throne of Grace, the oblation of himself with the certainty of acceptance, and communion with God, were the privileges of the Jew through the three kinds of sacrifice already mentioned. They belong to the Christian through the Holy Eucharist. One other Altar and Sacrifice there was under the Old Covenant, the Altar of Incense. Exod. xxx. 1-10, 34-38. This Altar stood at the door of the Holy of Holies, between the Mercy-seat and the Altar of Burnt-offering; and the sweet savour of the Burnt-offering could pass into the Presence of God only through and by means of the sweet odour of the Incense. Once a year, and but once, the High Priest carried the Incense within the veil.

What could he represent, then, but our Great High Priest entering into the Presence of God to make intercession for us? What could the Incense signify but the prayers of the people of God? Ps. cxli. 2; Rev. v. 8. Our worship cannot reach God without prayer. And therefore prayer is a part of the Holy Eucharistic service. While we 'do this,' we pray. We confess sin, and implore pardon. We acknowledge God's sovereignty over us, and beseech Him to accept our offering of body, soul, and spirit. We unite ourselves in will to Him, we ask all things necessary for His glory, for the good of the whole Church, and for our own salvation. It is by the prayer of petition that we obtain the sanctification

of every thought, word, and deed; that by the prayer of adoration we may offer them to Him in acceptable sacrifice.

Therefore, in the chamber of the Holy Eucharist, He who is now preparing to offer the Incense of His Intercession, ch. xvii., teaches them of the new power which He gives to prayer. In that day, when He shall have sent the Comforter, they shall ask no more questions of Him; for that Spirit of Truth shall give them knowledge and wisdom and understanding. They shall pray to the Father in His Name. Hitherto they had not asked in the Name of Jesus. Henceforth all their prayers shall be made in that Name, and they shall obtain fulness of joy.

In His Name! It is not quite the same as for His sake. In His Name, means in Him. And how shall they be *in* Him, except by Sacramental union and abiding. The whole discourse hangs together, rooted and built up in the blessed Sacrifice and Feast in which they have been all made one Bread, one with Him and with each other. After communion, prayer. For then we are *in* Christ; we pray *in* His Name; we shall surely obtain. This is why the Church would have us at every communion bring some special petition for grace for ourselves or others.

No need for Him to assure them that at that day He will ask the Father for them. Their prayers in His Name will rise to fill the golden censer from which the incense is offered upon the Golden Altar before the Throne of God. Rev. viii. 3-5. The Father will hear you, out of His own very love to you, for your love and faith towards Me. And it is as ye believe in My coming forth from the Father, and My returning to Him again.

They understand Him now, and make confession of their faith anew. But He, knowing their weakness, speaks warningly. Nevertheless, in spite of their unfaithfulness, He will not be alone; and for them He promises peace after their tribulation through His victory over the world.

365. *Conditions of acceptable Prayer.* St. John xvi. 23.

FOUR times in this discourse the Lord gives the disciples the assurance that their prayers made in His Name shall be answered. Ch. xiv. 13; xv. 7, 16; xvi. 23. This last time He begins the promise with, 'Verily, verily;' as though He who is the Truth were swearing by Himself. Heb. vi. 13.

It is a wonderful promise; the more wonderful because it seems to have so often failed. Whatever we ask we ask in Jesus' Name. Yet we often ask and receive not. Or two persons ask each for advantage over the other; two nations ask each for victory over the other. In granting the prayer of one, God must refuse the other. How does this agree with the promise?

St. James gives us one explanation why our prayers fail of their answer. 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.' St. James iv. 3. Let us look well that, while we make much of the promise, we understand the conditions.

We must ask in the Name of Jesus. And in the Name of Jesus means, for His sake, and because we are His, baptized into His Name, Christians, members of His Body. The promise depends upon our having received, and our still possessing, the grace of the two great Sacraments which bind us to Him.

None can rightly ask in Jesus' Name, (1), unless he have been baptized into it, and has the right to be called by that Holy Name, by continual communion with and abiding in Christ, Gal. iii. 27;—(2), unless he have a firm faith, and confidence that all things, whatsoever he shall ask in prayer, believing, he shall receive, St. Matt. xxi. 22;—(3), unless he be striving after a holy life, and have an actual union with Christ, to the bringing forth much fruit. 'If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' And there is no such abiding without holiness. 'He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit,' St. John xv. 5; xvi. 4;—(4), unless he persevere in prayer; for he must ask in faith, nothing wavering, St. James i. 5-7;—(5), unless he be praying in union with the Church; for when two of you shall agree as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them, St. Matt. xviii. 19;—(6), unless he ask according to God's will; for then only He heareth us. 1 St. John v. 14.

We complain that we ask and have not; that His promise has come utterly to an end. But is it not our own infirmity? Ps. lxxvii. 8-10. Have we not forgotten these conditions? Or, remembering them, have we not neglected them? We must be in Jesus, believing in Him; believing that He will hear and give; keeping His commandments, and, by our abiding in Him, bringing forth much fruit; persevering in our prayer like the importunate widow; in union with His whole Mystical Body; asking all things according to His will. Then our faith and patience will see His answering love, whether He give or withhold. We shall leave all to His will; and shall know that what He does not

give would harm rather than profit us. And so we shall have all and abound.

366. *The Great Intercession.* St. John xvii.

‘THESE things have I spoken unto you.’ So the Son of God ended His discourse to the disciples. ‘These things spake Jesus,’ St. John repeats, as the Divine Teacher; words more wonderful than had ever fallen from the lips of learned Scribe or inspired Prophet. But greater words than these He is now about to speak. Hitherto we have listened as in the court of the Priests, while at the Altar of Burnt-offering He spake to them and to us. Now for the moment there is silence. He turns from us, the one great and only High Priest, to the Holy of Holies, His Sacrifice given, broken, and shed, there to offer, as upon the Altar of Incense, the prayer of Intercession. It is to the Father that He speaks now; not for the first time in the disciples’ presence, St. Luke xi. 1; but for the first time, doubtless, allowing them to hear His inmost communings with the Father. He is anticipating the time when, having obtained eternal redemption, He shall appear in the presence of God, in Highest Heaven, His great work ever to make intercession for us. Heb. vii. 25; ix. 24. With what awe must the Apostles have observed Him as, looking no more upon them, He lifted up His eyes to Heaven; as, speaking no more to them, He begins, ‘Father, the hour is come!’ And with what awe must we read, our voices hushed, our ears attentive, our hearts prostrate in reverential devotion, while He prays for us. It is indeed the voice of a God and not of a man; God speaking with God, and man permitted to listen. The Lord is in

His Holy Temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.

Let us be careful to observe the place and connection of this prayer, which is, in an especial sense, the Lord's prayer. It stands midway between the Sacrifice of the newly instituted Eucharist, and the Sacrifice of the Cross. Or, rather—for it is well to be exact—it stands midway in the great Sacrifice begun in the institution of the Holy Eucharist and completed in His death. It is founded upon the words spoken and the acts done just now in the Upper Chamber. Partaking of that Holy Communion of His Body and Blood, the disciples there received Eternal Life in the knowledge of the Father and of the Son, ch. xiv. 9-11; xvii. 2, 3; participation in the Divine Nature and glory, union into His Mystical Body, xvii. 21-23. There He had finished the work which the Father had given Him to do, xiv. 31; xvi. 33. Then He had shewed them the Father's Name, xiv. 9, 10. There they had received His words, and acknowledged that He came forth from God, believing and sure that the Father had sent Him, xvi. 27-33; xvii. 4, 6, 8. There it was that the Son of Man was in some sense glorified, xiii. 31, and so, being able to impart glory to them, did so impart it, in the Communion of His Body and Blood, xvii. 22. It is a Sacrificial and a Eucharistic Prayer; one which could not have been offered before this time, or elsewhere, but appropriate now; even as the Incense of the Temple, which, being offered after the sacrifices, carried all the power and sweetness of the sacrifice into the Holy of Holies, before and up to the very Presence, and Throne, and Mercy-seat of the Father.

367. *The Glory of the Son and the Father.* St.
John xvii. 1-5.

THE Son of God is praying. Listen with bowed head and reverent heart.

When He gave us a prayer, He taught us to begin, 'Our Father.'

But He does not say, '*Our* Father.' For He stands alone in His Sonship with God. Though we, and the Angels, are sons of God, it is in a different way. St. John. xx. 17. He is the only Begotten Son of God. Neither man, nor Angel, nor Archangel, can kneel by Jesus' side, and say with Him, 'Our Father.' Therefore He says, 'Father.'

The hour which He had so much dreaded is come. Ch. xii. 27, 28. And He is ready. Now, in the prospect of suffering, He is satisfied with the glory. Heb. xii. 2. He prays for glory; not as a man would ask for glory for himself, but that the Son may glorify the Father. What, then, is that glory? Even Eternal Life for all who are truly the Son's. And what, again, is Eternal Life? Even the knowledge of the Father, and of the Son whom the Father has sent. Men must turn from their idols to serve the only Living and True God. 1 Thess. i. 9. But the knowledge of the Supreme Being in Heaven is not Life Eternal until there be added to it the knowledge of the Son, sent into the world that the world through Him might be saved.

This knowledge Jesus has given to those who would receive His word, to the disciples especially. So far in His earthly ministry He had glorified His Father; so far He had finished the work appointed to Him. His ministry of preaching was finished.

It was for the Holy Spirit to bring to the disciples' remembrance what He had taught, to give them understanding, to fill them with all spiritual benediction and grace. He is in the midst of the final Sacrifice. A few hours, and the work will be finished indeed, in the lifeless Body of Jesus hanging on the Cross, in the Spirit of Jesus passed away to Paradise. Then shall come the glory, for which He prays; the glory of the Resurrection, of the Ascension, of the Comforter poured out upon the brethren; of the Church established in the Name of Jesus, believing on Him and adoring Him; of Jesus sitting at the right Hand of the Father, receiving as Son of Man, in His ascended human nature, that glory which He had with the Father, as the Son of God, before ever the world was.

Power over all spirits, good and evil, was His from all eternity. In the fulness of time, being made Flesh, He received also power over all flesh; something beyond strength and will; the power surely of uniting all flesh into His Flesh, by Sacramental union, that we should be members of His Flesh, Eph. v. 30; and so that this flesh of ours might be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and become once more capable of Eternal Life. By His Flesh our flesh hath Eternal Life now; resurrection from the dead, and the Life of the world to come, when He shall change our vile bodies, that they may be like unto His glorious Body.

368. *Manifestation of the Father's Name.* St.
John xvii. 6-10.

THE first part of this prayer the Lord offers for His own and the Father's glory. This second part He offers for His Church through Himself, for

the men whom the Father has given Him out of the world. The Bridegroom could not leave His widowed Bride without praying for her. He has done much for the disciples, especially within the last hours. He has manifested to them the Father's Name; He has shewn them plainly of the Father, of all the power, and holiness, and love, bound up in that Name. He has made God known to them as the Father of Jesus, as giving to the Son all power of teaching and miracle. St. John xiv. 7-11. They likewise, belonging to the Father, have been given by the Father to the Son, predestinated to be conformed to His image. Rom. viii. 29, 30. They have kept His word. They have acknowledged Him as the Son of the Father. Ch. xvi. 29, 30. They have believed that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. So believing in the Son, they have believed in the Father also. Ch. xii. 44; xiv. 1. And this faith they who came after received and preached. Jesus, says St. Paul, is the image of the invisible God, the brightness of His glory, the express image of His Person. Col. i. 15; Heb. i. 3.

But there is a terrible thought in the expressions, 'Whom Thou gavest me out of the world;' and, 'I pray not for the world.' In order to be safe, then, to belong to the Saviour entirely, to have a share in His eternal intercession, the Christian must have come out from this present evil world. It is not that he is required to make any separation from his friends, or relations, or business, 1 Cor. v. 10, 11; but he is to come out from among the children of the world in spirit. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. For that world the Son of God does not pray, though He prays for His own. The friendship of the world is enmity with God.

Yet surely Christ prayed for His enemies, as when they nailed Him to the Cross. St. Luke xxiii. 34. He who died that through Him the world might be saved, surely prayed often for the world. It must mean that in this prayer the world had no mention. Yet, on the other hand, there is a sin unto death, for which we are not bidden to pray. 1 St. John v. 16. And at this time the world must have been near upon this sin, wilfully rejecting the Son of God. Oh, how awful must be that state in which we are uncertain whether we are included in the intercession of the Great High Priest, or no!

But those who belong to Jesus, for them He prays. For, while they belong to Him, they are the Father's also. And here comes in one of those wondrous expressions which raise Jesus of Nazareth far above Angels and men into oneness with the Father. 'All mine are Thine;' that we could any of us say to God. 'All Thine are mine;' that we dare not say. That He only could say who was one with the Father. This He had said before. Ch. xvi. 15. Even while He *asks*, as one desiring to receive, He *claims*, as one possessing. And even as He asks for glory, He declares Himself to be glorified in them.

369. *The World.* St. John xvii. 6, 9-16.

THE World is one of the three great enemies whom we renounced at our Baptism, against whom we are pledged to fight, from whom our Lord Jesus Christ came to deliver us. Gal. i. 4. Yet, while we have a fairly clear notion of what is meant by the devil, and the flesh, few can exactly explain what is meant by the world. Nobody ever confesses to being worldly. We all think that we just escape

its snares. And so we let the world have every possible advantage over us.

For instance, we say that our Lord, and the Apostles after Him, spoke of the heathen world, in which there was no faith in God, no enlightened sense of right and wrong, in which the worst sins were winked at, even if they were not admired as virtues. And because we are not in danger of falling into such a miserable state of unbelief and vice, we flatter ourselves that we are in no danger from the world. All the worse for us ! And all the better for the world's chances, if we have given up watching against it and fearing it !

Nevertheless the words of Jesus are true for all time, and for Christian lands. In our day, and in our own country, there is as much as there was then in Judæa of a world which knows neither the Father nor Jesus ; which cannot receive the Spirit ; which rejoices because Jesus is out of sight ; for which He cannot always pray ; on which He denounces woe, because of offences ; to which His people may not be conformed ; the friends of which cannot be God's friends ; by which Christians will be persecuted, and which they must overcome by faith.

What, then, is the world ? It is the spirit which lives for itself and for the present ; as if men were their own masters ; as if the great object of life were present ease, and gain, and honour ; as if God were neither its Creator nor its end, and need not be honoured as the Supreme Maker, and Preserver, and Ruler of us all. The world is the spirit which disowns or forgets God ; or, more plainly, the men who live according to this spirit.

There is, no doubt, a certain difference between the present and past ages. Then men openly denied God, and their rule of life was, 'Let us eat and

drink, for to-morrow we die.' Very few would say as much now. But men can act upon a maxim without saying openly that they have adopted it. And when we consider the thousands who pursue wealth, or pleasure, or the praise of men, we cannot help thinking that these greatly prefer the things which are seen to the things which are not seen, the present to the future, the world, in fact, to God. They get more and more taken up with the present. They never do anything in the Name of Jesus, or for the glory of God. They think less and less of God, and of God's laws; of sin; of grace; of the Sacraments; of penitence and stern self-denial; of taking up the Cross, and having fellowship with a suffering Saviour. The world does not, cannot, understand the continual watchfulness and strife, the communion with an unseen Lord, the hope of a distant and uncertain reward.

Perhaps, after all, this is our case.

And so the world draws away the hearts of many, poor as well as rich, from Jesus. They live for themselves and for the present. They think and feel with the rest. So they are conformed to the world. And when the world comes to an end—or when they go from it—what will their portion be? For they in their lifetime have had their good things!

370. *The World and God's Keeping.* St. John
xvii. 11-16.

THE Son of God had been glorified in His disciples by their faith and obedience. While He was with them He was keeping them by the guardianship and guidance of His visible presence. Henceforth they must walk by faith. And then will come

their hour of danger. Therefore He prays for them that the Father will keep them now and always in His Name. That Name is Holy.

Holy Father! We need to be reminded sometimes of the awful Holiness of God, that He only is Holy. It is by this Name that Seraphim and Saints sing their chiefest praises, Isa. vi. 3; Rev. xv. 3, 4; by this Name that He is to be feared and glorified, and also to be loved. This Name the Father had given to His Son Jesus. St. Luke i. 35; St. Mark i. 24. And He has also put it upon us that we should be called holy, or Saints. Heb. iii. 1. In this Name He will keep us. And unless He keep us *in* His Name, as in a House of Defence, that we may abide in Him, surely we are lost.

So far Jesus had kept them. One only was lost, and he, not plucked away by the evil one but destroying himself, the son of destruction, following his own evil will. God's grace will not and cannot save us in spite of ourselves. Hos. xiii. 9. The Holy Ghost had foretold this. Ps. xli. 9. Now it was come to pass, proving the foreknowledge of God, lest any should suppose that His counsels were made of none effect by the power of Satan or the evil heart of men. Jesus has given the disciples of His glory. He has also left them the fulness of His joy, in His own and in His Father's Word. Ch. xvi. 22-24; 1 St. John i. 4. But, at present, they are left in the world; and, because they are not the world's children, they must have tribulation. From this He cannot save them. He does not pray that they may be taken out of the world, but be saved from the evil one. Herein lies the Christian's danger that he lives in the world. And herein lies the glory of his victory, that he has, like his Master, met the foe in fair fight and conquered him.

Peter would have been taken out of the world to follow his Master now. In his strong personal affection, to be with Jesus in bodily presence was everything. St. Luke ix. 33; St. John xiii. 36, 37. But that was not the Lord's will. We must be tried and proved. We must shew that we can walk by faith, for faith it is which overcometh the world. Many a poor wearied soul, many a sorely tempted one, many an anguished sufferer, longs sore to be taken out of the world. If they could but flee away, and live a hermit's life, they think then they could much better work out their own salvation. Ps. lv. 1-8. But, O faint-hearted one, how wilt thou conquer if thou flee the strife? how wilt thou win the Crown if thou refuse to bear the Cross? O Soldier of Him who has overcome the world, set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of trouble! Ecclus. ii. 2. In His Name He will keep thee from the evil one; and will make this short-lived evil work for thine eternal good.

371. *Sanctification in the Truth.* St. John xvii.
17-19.

THE disciples were not of the world; how then did they need sanctification? For sanctification is a setting apart to the service of God. It was because sanctification is a progressive work, not done once for all, but to be renewed and increased continually. This is why we sum up the latter portion of the Creed by saying, 'I believe in the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.' It is not only that He has once sanctified us in our Baptism, but that He sanctifies us still, in ever increasing holiness, if we correspond to His

grace and holy motions. So the Lord prays that the disciples, whom He has taken out of the world, may be made holy, and more holy, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The instrument of sanctification is the Word of the Father. And who is that Word, but Jesus Himself? He is the WORD, and He is also the TRUTH. And the Spirit, too, is Truth. 1 St. John v. 6. Thus were the disciples sanctified by the Baptism of the Spirit of Truth on the Day of Pentecost. Thus our first sanctification was wrought for us at our new birth by the washing of the water in the Word. Eph. v. 26. Thus is our sanctification continued in the Spirit's ministration of the Word, and of our partaking of the Incarnate Word Himself in the Sacrament of the Altar.

He prays for their sanctification, inasmuch as He has sent them into the world. For the world is a place of ruin to all who are not daily sanctified. Therefore the Psalmist says, 'Thy word have I hid within my heart, that I should not sin against Thee.' Ps. cxix. 11. If he felt the Word of God to be his protection and sanctification, how much more ought we to pray for, and to keep, Christ Himself, the Incarnate Word, within our hearts! Eph. iii. 17. Then shall we, as priests before Him, washed in the Blood of the Word of God, be able to offer unto the Father ourselves, our souls and bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable before Him. Rom. xii. 1.

Thus it was that our Great High Priest and true Victim offered Himself to the Father. For our sakes He sanctified Himself, obeying in all things the ancient law of the Priests? For they, before they offered their sacrifices, sanctified themselves with the washing of water. Exod. xxx. 17-21. He, the true Lamb of God, separated Himself, even,

as the Lamb of the Passover was separated, or sanctified, four days before its death. From all eternity He was the High Priest for ever, and the Lamb that was slain. In His Incarnation, in all His obedience to the law of Moses, in His Baptism, in the institution of the Holy Eucharist, He was sanctifying, dedicating, separating Himself; by the Eternal Spirit of Truth offering Himself without spot to God in the sacrifice completed upon the Altar of the Cross; for our sakes thus sanctifying Himself, that He might purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living and true God, that we also might be sanctified in the truth.

372. *Unity.* St. John xvii. 20-23.

HAVING prayed for Himself, and for the disciples at His side, Jesus now prays for all who shall believe in Him through their word; prays for us. His first petition for the whole Church is this, that all may be one with each other in Him, even as He and the Father are One; all holding one faith, all obeying one will, all united in one holy fellowship.

This oneness of Christians is to be something more than agreement in the fundamental doctrines of a common Christianity. It is to be a unity which the world can see and understand. It is to be the proof to the world that Jesus is the very Son of God sent from the Father. Where the inner unity of faith and obedience and love is, there must be also outward and visible unity. Either is imperfect without the other. To be added to the Church is but another phrase for being added to the Lord. Acts ii. 47; v. 14. To put it as clearly as possible, Jesus prayed that His people might be but one flock, that His

Church should be the one fold, He Himself the one Shepherd; in order that the world, seeing this oneness, might believe on Him and be saved. To them this oneness is to be a partaking of that glory which the Father has given to the Son; their perfection, and their consecration to the Christian priesthood, the proof that the love of the Father, wherewith He has loved the Son, has been poured out upon them; Christ in the Father; the Father in Christ.

For a little while the Saviour's prayer had its fulfilment. For a little while believers were all of one heart and one mind. Acts ii. 41-47; iv. 32. And the world said, 'See how these Christians love one another. Then came heresies—that is choosings, people choosing their own teachers, their own forms of doctrine and worship; for the word 'heresy,' means simply 'choosing.' Then heresy led to schism, that is, open division and dissent. 1 Cor. i. 10-13. Heresies and divisions grew to a great head in the early days. Even the Apostles had to exhort the brethren to hold fast the form of sound words, and to mark those who caused divisions and avoid them. 2 Tim. i. 13; Rom. xvi. 17.

Four times in these three verses the Son of God, the Head of the Church, prays that all who believe in Him may be one; one in such manner that the world may see and believe. Yet the prayer of the Son of God seems to have been prayed in vain. Not only are Christians divided into more sects than we can count, but they do not even pretend to grieve over their divisions. They neither seek nor desire to be one. They do not believe the same doctrines, or unite in the same worship. They shew their zeal for Christ by biting and devouring one another. And the world looks on, amused and

scornful, and claps its hands, and urges them on to the strife, and is hardened in its unbelief.

Do these separated Christians really believe? Do they love the Lord Jesus in sincerity? Are they *in Him*? It is hard to think so. They deny the grace of the Baptism which planted them into Him, making them members of His Body; they deny the grace of the Holy Communion which binds them to Him, and keeps them members of His Body. They deny the grace and authority of His Priests. What wonder then, if, neglecting the means of that union, they despise that union and lose it! What wonder that—oh, awful power given to men!—they have made their Saviour's prayer to be of none effect!

373. *Glory, Knowledge, and Love.* St John xvii.
24-26.

STEP by step this prayer covers the whole ground of the Christian life. Jesus has prayed that those whom the Father has given Him may be kept sanctified, united in each other and in Him. Now He prays for the fruit of these blessings, that they may be with Him where He is; that they may behold His glory, the glory given to Him out of the Father's love before the foundation of the world.

See how the Lord's words justify what the Apostle says of Him in the opening chapter. Ch. i. 14. To St. John, at any rate, this part of the prayer was fulfilled even in this life; He saw the glory of the Eternal God through the weakness of the suffering man, as at the Transfiguration. He saw the glory of the ascended Lord in His banishment at Patmos. Rev. 12-18.

Observe also the Son's claim to be heard. Now it is more than, 'I pray.' It is, 'I *will*,' an expression which no mere man dare employ to the Most High God. It is hard to imagine the *prayer* of Jesus failing; it is impossible to imagine His *will* failing. Again, He says not, 'Where I shall be,' but, 'Where I am.' First, indeed, He holds them with Him in the fellowship of His sufferings. But especially He will have them with Him where, in His Divine Nature, He is even now with God. St. John iii. 13. He is the Head, with God. They, the Body, shall be with Him there; made to sit with Him in Heavenly places; Eph. ii. 6; seeing the glory which was His with God before ever the earth and the world were made.

And now He addresses the Father by another title. Just now it was '*Holy* Father;' for then He prayed for their sanctification. Now it is, '*O Righteous, O just* Father.' We dare only address Him as merciful and gracious. We fear to speak of His Holiness; equally we fear His Justice. Yet, even in this title He encourages us, through this same Apostle. If we confess our sins He is faithful and *just*, or *righteous*, to forgive us our sins. 1 St. John i. 9. God's justice and righteousness are to be declared in His judgment of the world which would not know Him, in His reward of those who have known and believed the Word of His Son. This faith will be imputed to us, according to His promise, for justification or righteousness. For it is bound up with all that forms part of the sanctification of the soul, with the knowledge of the Name and of the Love of the Father.

Yes, this is the will of Christ, that those whom the Father hath given Him may be with Him where He is; eye-witnesses and sharers of His sorrow and

of His glory. They must see Him and learn of Him; they must follow Him and obey Him; they must bear the Cross after Him; they must know that Name which they bear to be Holy and Righteous, lest they should dishonour it by sin. He, their Lord, may be out of sight. Nevertheless they are with Him, and—to their great comfort, otherwise they must fall—He is with them, though He is in Heaven and they upon earth. The Father's Love and Presence supports them too. And they, abiding in Him, being with Him in the bearing of His Cross, and overcoming the world, shall hereafter sit with Him upon His throne. Rev. iii. 21. And there the Divine Love will be perfected in them for ever.

374. *The Going to the Mount of Olives.* St. Mark
xiv. 26-31.

THE prayer is ended. And now the last hymn of the Passover is sung, either the latter portion of the Great Hallel, Psalms cxv.-cxviii.—the first portion, Psalms cxiii.-cxiv., having been sung at an earlier part of the meal—or the Sabbath Eve hymn of the Jews, a hymn of praise to the Living and Only God, the Lord of all things, the Giver of the Law, the Rewarder of good and evil, the Sender of Messiah, the Bestower of Eternal Life; expressions which correspond closely to the prayer of Jesus. But the Psalms are not less suited to the evening. They, too, speak of the God above all; of the wine of salvation; the death of the Saints; the vain rage of the enemies; Life instead of death; the rejected Stone becoming the Head of the corner; the Lord's Day of rejoicing and gladness, and the Sacrifice bound to the horns of the Altar. So the

hymn would be their recitation of the work of Jesus, begun in pain, ended in glory.

Then they passed from the upper chamber, out of the city, across the brook Kedron, to the opposite brow, the Garden of Gethsemane, on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. Here had come, a thousand years before, one who was in so many ways a type of Christ, David fleeing from his rebellious son; David, one chosen out of the people, the shepherd, the king of Israel, betrayed by those who ate of his bread and drank of his cup; deserted by so many whom he called his friends; no longer a king, doubtful even of life. 2 Sam. xv. 14. This night the Son of David passes the same way, with His disciples; they less faithful to Him than David's servants were to their master. One, indeed, there is, who takes up Ittai's words; but, though his Lord has prayed for him, he cannot to-night do for Jesus as Ittai did for David. He has not courage to be with his Master in life and in death. 2 Sam. xv. 19-22.

Once more Jesus warns the eleven of the suffering and death which is now at hand; warns them, too, in the words of ancient prophecy, Zech. xiii. 7. The Shepherd, His hands wounded in the house of His friends, is to be smitten, and the sheep are to be scattered. Yet, in His tender love and pity for their weakness, He tells them again of His victory over death. After He is risen He will go before them into Galilee.

Again, Peter, ever eager and loving, insists on his faithful devotion. But it is with a mingling of pride. Although all should be offended, yet will he never be offended. He is boasting now over his brethren. The third warning has roused in him an unhesitating self-confidence. Not even the Lord's

solemn opening of the future can make him distrustful of himself. In vain does Jesus give him the sign, 'Before the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice.' Peter only speaks the more vehemently. It is St. Mark who tells us of the 'more vehemently,' hearing from the Apostle's lips the tale of his warning and of his fall. Not even in the face of death will Peter deny his master in anywise; neither by act or word or sign! Words spoken from a loving and brave, and sincere heart! And yet he fell. Sincere we may be in all we say. Still neither love, nor courage, nor sincerity, will suffice us in the hour of temptation by our cruel and crafty foe. Watchfulness and humility must guard the love and the courage, and the sincerity; and the grace and power of God must keep all, or Satan will get the advantage over us, and sift us as wheat.

What Peter said, that said they all. St. Matthew tells us this; as if to shew that Peter did not stand alone in his bold profession and weak denial. All promised to be faithful to their Master even unto death. Then a little while, and all forsook Him and fled.

We, too, have promised to fight manfully against the devil, the world, the flesh. We often renew our vows in all sincerity. Let us watch also, and be humble, lest we likewise, under sudden temptation, deny our dearest Lord.

PART XIV.

THE PASSION.

375. *The Garden of Gethsemane.* St. Matt. xxvi.
36-46.

THE Saviour of the world, the Son of God, is come forth to His strife with the evil one. It is on the scene of His one earthly triumph that He will suffer pain and distress, grief and fear, beyond our imaginings. The Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane are to see the soul of the God-man exceeding sorrowful and very heavy. Rightly was it named Geth-Semane, the Olive-Press. For here the Man of Sorrows was bruised and crushed, and the holy oil of Divine Love flowed forth in sanctifying stream. And, as in a garden the first Adam sinned in the indulgence of the flesh, so in a garden the second Adam drained the bitter cup of affliction.

Leaving eight of the disciples near the entrance of the garden, and bidding them pray for themselves, as He had prayed for them, that they enter not into temptation and be delivered from the evil one, He passes a little farther with the favoured three, Peter, James, and John. Then His human spirit faints under the burden. He begins to be sorrowful, sore amazed, like one stunned with some grievous blow, and very heavy. And His heart, f "

of all purest human affections, turns to them, His friends, as He had lately called them. They know, to a certain extent, what their Lord doeth, and what He suffers. Their companionship and sympathy comfort Him. He would have them near Him, watching, spectators of His agony of mind and body, praying with Him as well as for themselves. Is not this an invitation to us to draw near in heart to the Passion of Jesus; and, especially in the awful Holy Week, to meditate upon each scene of His sufferings, each blow and each pang which He bore for our sakes? It is to this the Church calls us in Lent, calls us still more urgently in Holy Week, most urgently of all on Good Friday. She would lead us out with her, reverently following her Lord to the Cross and to the Tomb; and there she would have us watch till the Angel tells us He is risen. She would have us go forth bearing His reproach, to behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow. She would shew us all that our God bore for us, His Body in every nerve racked with pain, His Heart in every thought exceeding sorrowful even unto death. All through that weary night, all through that painful day, she points us to Him: 'Behold the Man; wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, our Lord and our God!'

It is the only way many of us can realise fellowship with Him. And to mortify the body, to humble the soul, to meditate on the Passion of Jesus, is a service acceptable to Him, profitable for ourselves. Who, then, would wish to transgress the Church's loving rule of penitential discipline? The Spouse of Christ gathers her children around her and follows her Bridegroom to the death. Who that loves Him, who that thinks upon His agony, would choose Lent

for marriage, or Good Friday for merrymaking and feasting? When they come to think, when they come some day to love Him, will not His voice sound reproachfully in their ears,—‘I called you to tarry a little and watch with Me. Ye could not watch one hour!’

376. *The Agony.* St. Mark xiv. 32-42.

THE Son of God has asked for the companionship and sympathy of His disciples. Thus He sanctifies all pure human craving for fellowship and love, for the kind eye, the loving voice, the soothing hand, in the hour of suffering. Then, as if the travail of His soul were too sacred to be fully imparted to them, He is parted from them about a stone's throw, and falling on His Face to the ground makes His prayer. ‘O Father—Abba, Father—if Thou wilt, take away this Cup from Me;’ then, in His entire resignation to the Father's will, ‘Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.’

Every act of the Son of God, more especially in His suffering and death, works its own peculiar blessing to our souls. Therefore we pray that by worthy Communion we may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of His Passion. Therefore we pray Him, by His Agony and Bloody Sweat, by His Passion as well as by His Cross, to deliver us. And by His Agony we mean more especially those Pains of Soul and Body which He suffered this night in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The pains of Body now proceeded rather from the anguish of His Soul. Man having sinned in both parts of his nature, in soul as well as in body, must suffer punishment in both. This double punishment is figured in the double sacri-

fice of the Day of Expiation; Levit. xvi.; one goat being slain, the other—known as the scape-goat—after the sins of the people had been laid upon it, being driven away into the wilderness. There alone with the wild beasts, it would suffer in its loneliness and fear all that its lower animal nature could suffer, apart from any bodily pains of hunger and thirst, weariness and wounds. So does man suffer in spirit under the burden of his sin. He knows what it is to have offended against a loving Father, to have cut himself off from God, to be deserving of temporal and eternal punishment; to be covered with shame and confusion of face; to fear; it may be, to despair. This punishment of the sinner the Son of God was now taking upon Himself, so far as His sinless nature could be touched by it.

For now He was placing Himself in the position of sinful man. It was written of Him, long before, that the Lord had laid on Him the iniquity of us all; that He bore our griefs, our sorrows, the chastisement of our peace, the stripes by which we are healed. He became a curse for us. He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Cor. v. 21.

Now it is, therefore, that the Soul of Jesus is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Now there fell upon Him a horror of darkness new and strange, a burden never felt before, the fear of death, the untold, unimaginable weight of sin, so infinitely great and vile, slaying so many millions of souls; sin making the Cross necessary, and then making the Cross to be of none effect; and with this the consciousness of God's anger upon sin, of the Face of God turned away from the sinner.

It was in the Garden rather than on the Cross that the Saviour drank this bitterest draught of the suffering due to the sinner; here that He chose to endure an anguish of soul, to take upon Himself all that sin could do, all that sin deserved, as though He were Himself the sinner.

377. *The Bloody Sweat.* St. Luke xxii. 40-46.

IN His Divine Nature the Son of God could not suffer. In His human nature He could, and did, suffer as the gentlest and most sensitive of mankind. The Divine Nature did not mitigate one pang. It only sustained the human nature in endurance. Thus Christ, being very man, suffered, as we might have suffered, from hunger and thirst, weariness and loneliness, grief and fear.

What, then, was this exceeding sorrow which amazed and stunned His heart? What was this agony which wrung from His human will a prayer which could not be granted, which filled His soul with fear, which pressed the blood from His sacred veins, that it should drop like sweat upon the earth?

Ah, who can tell? Partly it was the shrinking from death. Not merely as men fear pains of body, the severing of the spirit from the flesh, the passage into an unknown state. To Him, the Eternal Life, Death was something strange and horrible exceedingly; the badge and penalty of sin, the sting and chain of the evil one. Heb. ii. 14, 15. We, who are by nature dead, cannot imagine what it was to the Son of God to humble Himself to death.

Then again, in this hour of the Power of Darkness, St. Luke xxii. 53, the Devil once more assaulted

and tormented the Saviour's pure soul with visions of the sins into which he had plunged, and would hereafter plunge, the souls of so many for whom Christ was dying; making Him to see for how many He would die in vain. Then our loving Redeemer saw our sins passing before His eyes, the sins by which we crucify Him afresh, and which we commit so heedlessly, aye, sometimes so presumptuously. What a vision of lost souls then passed in review before His eyes! The sins of the whole world rose before Him, and then lay upon His soul in all their weight and penalty. Not that sin could touch Him, or as if any consciousness and sense of sin was His. But its fearful penalty for the time lay on Him, as in this darkest hour He made Himself like unto us in all other things but sin.

How awful this agony was we can never know. We can only guess at it from His words and actions. Draw near and listen, again, as He prays. Be silent, learn, and adore.

Praying thus, He teaches that we may lawfully ask for the relief and removal of pain; yet only according to the Father's will. And in the answer to His prayer we see how the Father grants even while He denies; and so, how we gain the promise attached to prayer in Christ's Name, even while the thing asked for is withheld. There appeared an Angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. The sorrow is not removed. But strength to sustain is given. It is good to endure by the removal of the trial. Yet is it not better to endure, sustaining and conquering, by the help of grace?

Meanwhile the disciples are sleeping. He returns to them, as if for comfort. But in vain. Spite of His warnings, they cannot watch with Him. A second and a third time He prays, in

the same words. Then He rouses them, finally; for the betrayer is at hand.

378. *Abiding Sorrow for Sin.* St. Matt. xxvi.
37-43.

LET us linger yet awhile under the Olive Trees with the Son of God, watching and weeping with Him. For what is His sorrow? It is not for any sin of His own. No. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows? His soul is thus exceeding sorrowful, because we will not sorrow. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Let us sorrow with Him then, for His sufferings and for our sins. It is strange how few will do this, how few can take a right view of sin. We are not surprised that those who openly deny the Lord should refuse to sorrow for sin, seeing that sin is their great delight. We are not surprised that the worldly and the careless should forget to sorrow for sin, or put it off to a more convenient season. But we are surprised that those who have sinned grievously, and whose hearts have been convinced of sin by the Holy Spirit, should not, with Peter, go out and weep bitterly. We are surprised that those who have been forgiven, as David was, should not in some way keep their sin ever before them, and still grieve for it, even while they rejoice in the assurance of their entire absolution.

The fact is we are slow to realize the guilt, and the stain, and the power of sin, especially of wilful sin in a baptized person. Look at it, in its pride, its ingratitude, its rebellion against God. Look at it, in the light of the Passion and the Cross. Look at it, again, as the Son of God falls to the earth, in an agony of sorrow, in a sweat of blood. Only by

His Cross and Passion could atonement be made for the guilt; only by His Blood could the dark stain be washed from our soul. Think again of the power of sin, how much it has lost to us, how it has dragged us down from what we might have been. Is not this cause for sorrow? Shall we dare to look on our lives as they really are, and yet be light-hearted and merry? O my Jesu, I have sinned too often, too grievously, against Thy love. Let me kneel near Thee, and weep plenteousness of tears.

But perhaps thou sayest,—‘My sins are forgiven; I have peace with God; I cannot any longer grieve; I must rejoice.’ And is it so, that thou canst thus lightly forget thy sins? Is it nothing to thee that thou hast sinned against a God so ready to forgive? Does not His ready forgiveness make thy sins blacker than ever? If He will remember thy sins no more, the greater reason that thou shouldst have them ever before thee. Rejoice, if thou mayest, in thy pardon; yet still sorrow for thy sins. Else ceasing to sorrow thou wilt cease to love; and then thou wilt cease to watch. And let this be the proof to thee of a right sorrow for sin, that thou dost sigh and cry over the sins of thy brethren around thee; Ezek. ix. 4; that thou daily prayest for their forgiveness and restoration. He who grieves not over the sins of others, cannot truly grieve over his own. He who grieves not over the dishonour done to his Lord by sin, whether his own or another’s, cannot rightly sorrow for sin. He is not watching with his Saviour in His agony.

379. *The Fear of Death.* Heb. v. 7-10.

THE fear of Death lay upon the soul of the Son of God as truly as it will lie upon our soul when life is drawing to a close. Our nature dreads

the mention and the thought of death. We fear the rending asunder of body and soul. We fear the pain of dying. We fear the unknown state which lies beyond death—the spirit passing away alone, to stand before the Judge, to hear its doom, to go to its own place. It is true that the fear which oppressed the soul of Jesus was not altogether like this. He the Life, He the Holy One of God, shrank from death as being the badge and penalty of sin. Still, as being true man, His sorrow and His fear were real, seeing man was created to be immortal, and through envy of the devil came Death into the world. Wisdom ii. 23, 24. So He sanctifies for us the natural instincts of the heart, the human shrinking and fear of death. He teaches us to pray in our fear, to trust in God, to resign ourselves to His hands, to drink the Cup which He puts to our lips. Then He treads the way before us, assaulted just as we may be, by the sharpest temptations of the evil one, yet conquering all; that we, seeing His foot-prints and upheld by His strength, may pass through the dark valley, fearing no evil. Ps. xxiii. 4.

To the heathen Death was all darkness. Even to the pious Jew of old time it was compassed with shadows. David could not always look Death steadfastly in the face. Ps. lv. 1-5; cxvi. 1-4. When Isaiah was sent with the message of death to Hezekiah, that pious king turned his face to the wall and wept sore. Isa. xxxviii. 1-3. Without the knowledge of Christ, Death was indeed terrible; the heathen could only guess at a future life. And even with the promises, the Jew trembled, uncertain what might be beyond the grave, not quite sure whether there were any resurrection of the body. The fear of Death was still upon him, and

made him subject to bondage. Heb. ii. 15. Then the Son of God took our flesh, and died. If that were all, we might still doubt and fear. But the third day He rose again; He liveth, He who was dead, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of Hell and of Death, Rev. i. 18; and rising He hath abolished Death and brought Life and Immortality to light. 2 Tim. i. 10. Henceforth, therefore, the Christian, if he fear Death, fears it in a different way. He fears it as an unknown enemy, as the moment in which his present being is, for the time, ended; in which the earthly house of this tabernacle is laid aside to dissolve into dust; in which his spirit passes to see its Judge, and to live in the world of spirits, waiting he knows not how long. Still, though he fears Death, he would not refuse to die. For to die, he knows now, is to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better than this weary, anxious striving. Phil. i. 23. Only to die—to die, that is, in a state of grace—and to be safe for ever with the Lord, that is rest, and peace, and joy! A little waiting! Then the resurrection and the glory! Jesus feared Death that we might fear it no longer.

Yet remember; the sting of Death is sin. And if sin has dominion over us, the death of Christ only makes Death more fearful than it was before.

380. *The Kiss of Judas.* St. Matt. xxvi. 47-50.

OF the eleven disciples not one could watch with Jesus one hour. Three times He comes to them; three times He finds them sleeping. And this though, for their own sakes and for His, He had bid them watch and pray. The twelfth disciple was wakeful enough, busy on His fearful

errand of betraying Jesus. So feeble is love; so strong and cruel is hate.

Judas had not been with Jesus three years for nothing. He knew that the early hour of that night would be spent upon the Mount of Olives; for Jesus oftentimes resorted there with His disciples. St. John viii. 1. His agreement with the Chief Priests had been made the previous day. After the sop and the words which told him that his guilt was known, he had hurried from the supper-table to his employers, eager to carry out his wicked purpose. The soldiers are collected to take their prisoner. And this shews us how great an awe of Jesus had filled the minds of all. They had observed and feared His influence over the multitude. They had seen His miracles. And they send out a great company of men and officers, with lanterns and torches, swords and staves, to take the meek and lowly Jesus of Nazareth. As if He could not be overcome except by force; as if these many must certainly prevail. How little did they—did even Judas—understand that no force of man or evil spirit could prevail against Him; but that His own will was giving Him into their hands.

Judas was at their head; Judas one of the Twelve, which knew the place. This then is the fruit of all his seeing Jesus, and hearing Him, and being with Him,—that he may strike the more certainly and cruelly! How are the things that should have been for his wealth become an occasion of falling! How is the knowledge of the Life become to him the savour of death unto death!

Judas is not contented with guiding the soldiers to the place. He will finish his task, he will earn his money fairly. Therefore he goes before them. He sees under the moonlight the twelve familiar

forms. According to the sign agreed upon, he goeth straightway to Jesus ; and with words of pretended respect,—‘Hail, Master!’ he kissed Him.

We are astonished at this depth of wickedness, this ingratitude, this vileness, this profane daring. But if the wickedness of the betrayer is wonderful, how much more wonderful the forbearance of the betrayed!

Is there no limit then to the Divine patience? One gentle word of remonstrance,—‘Friend, wherefore art thou come? Judas, with a kiss betrayest thou the Son of Man?’ That is all.

With a kiss! the often exchanged token of affection! What more awful than this sin of Judas, the betrayal of Jesus in the place of so much united prayer and of so many lessons of good; and by a kiss! What sin is at all like this, but the unworthy Communion of those who in the place of prayer and teaching touch the Body of Jesus with profane lips. Carelessness in religion is awful; open denial of Christ more awful still; most awful of all the sin of those who, purposing to continue in their sin, yet press forward to receive their Lord’s Body and Blood into their unholy mouth, and while discerning the Lord’s Body, boldly betray Him to the dishonour of their own vile lusts.

381. *The Officers fall to the Ground.* St. John
xviii. 1-9.

JUDAS has done his part, and slinks back among the crowd. And Jesus, though He knows, and for the very reason that He knows, all things that shall come upon Him, steps forward from among the disciples, to the surprise of the armed multitude. His enemies had expected to hunt for Him, as for

a robber, in the hiding-places of the Garden ; and, lo ! He speaketh boldly, as when before they sought to kill Him. St. John vii. 26. As He stands there by Himself, easily recognised by many in the bright moonlight—for the moon was at the full—no one ventures to lay hands on Him. ‘Whom seek ye?’ is His question. Had they dared to touch Him, there was no need for answer. But the answer comes :—‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ As if those who knew Him, and who might have answered, ‘It is Thou whom we seek,’ were awed by His presence, and left it to strangers to reply.

Jesus saith unto them, ‘I am.’

It is that same word which He had spoken of Himself when, walking on the stormy waters, He soothed the fears of the disciples,—‘I am ; be not afraid ;’ as also when the Jews disputed with Him in the Treasury of the Temple concerning His claim to save from death. St. John vi. 20 ; viii. 58. It is the Name of God who brought the people out of the land of Egypt, Ex. iii. 14 ; the glorious and fearful Name. No sooner have they heard it from the lips of Him who just now was falling on the ground with strong crying and tears, asking the sympathy of His friends, in the agony of a bloody sweat, needing to be upheld by an Angel’s ministrations, and now standing alone, unarmed, betrayed, all but deserted—no sooner has this Name passed His lips, than they, Chief Priests and Roman captains, soldiers and armed multitude, went backward and fell to the ground. So was another Scripture fulfilled. Ps. xxvii. 2, 3. Will not this awe which has seized their spirits, this hidden might which has overcome their bodily strength, convince them that they are fighting against God ? No, indeed. Vain are the warnings of Heaven when the heart of

man is fully set in him to do evil. Eccles. viii. 11. They rise to a repetition of the question and the replies; and then the Lord, hiding His strength, permits them to work their will upon Him. Here, as throughout, all is by His free-will. No man taketh His life from Him; He lays it down of Himself. But, knowing the disciples' weakness, while He gives Himself up, He asks that they may be permitted to escape. For just now He had said to His Father,—‘That thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the Son of Perdition.’ Ch. xvii. 12. Thus it is that He who, in His power, smote down His enemies under Him, condescends in His self-chosen weakness, to ask from those vanquished enemies a little pity for His feeble disciples. For He knows that they are not yet strong enough to endure.

382: *Jesus gives Himself up.* St. Mark xiv. 43-52.

THE armed multitude, having by this time recovered their courage, seize their prisoner. Peter, still strong in faith and zeal as in love, cannot endure the dishonour thus done to his Master. If Jesus will not defend Himself, His servants must do it. Else to what purpose were these two swords provided? St. Luke xxii. 35-38. Probably Peter did not yet understand that Jesus was really giving Himself up into the hands of wicked men. He would think naturally that Jesus was far too gentle, but that, if a disciple began the resistance, the Divine power of the Master would be forced to display itself. Besides, he will prove that he is no coward to desert and to deny his Lord. Without waiting for an answer to the hurried question, and careless of consequences, he strikes a blow which is

all but fatal. No matter to him that it falls upon a servant of the High Priest. Immediately the voice of Jesus is heard in calm and mighty rebuke. Not for Him shall appeal be made to the sword any more than to the fire from Heaven. St. Luke ix. 51-56. They who use the sword must expect to have it used against them. Desiring those who hold Him to release Him for His purpose of mercy, He touches the bleeding head, and heals it. It is the only act of mercy wrought where neither faith nor desire existed; a proof to all of His Almighty power, a confirmation of His claim to hold the armies of Heaven at His disposal; a rebuke of those who would hastily revenge by persecution dishonour done to His Holy Name; an earnest that He will make amends, even to His enemies, for the inconsiderate zeal of His own servants. Reminding Peter and the rest of His union with the Father, of His Lordship over the Angels—and that very hour they had seen an Angel sent from Heaven to comfort Him—He reminds them also of the Scriptures which could only be fulfilled by His willingly drinking the Cup which His Father has given. Then He turns to the multitude. They are surprised at the ease with which they have made their arrest; no flight, no exercise of miraculous power, either from God or from Beelzebub; no resistance beyond one quick blow which His hand is equally quick to heal; proof that He might have resisted them, as He said, by more than human strength! How was this? Hitherto, He reminds them, in spite of their bitter and murderous counsels, and with daily opportunity, they had never been able to take Him. That they have taken Him now is not owing to their swords and staves, but to His own yielding of Himself.

This is the hour in which they, and the powers of darkness, may work their will.

Utterly dismayed, perhaps as much in surprise as in cowardice, all the disciples then forsook Him and fled. They had not expected this so sudden and terrible ending of His teaching, and miracles, and kingdom. Nothing now was to be gained by staying with Him. He would neither rescue Himself, nor let them strike a blow on His behalf. Moreover, He had asked that they might go their way; and being free, they might get near Him among the crowd, and perhaps be able to aid, or at any rate to comfort Him. In thus consulting their own safety they acted prudently. For one young man—St. Mark it is supposed—bolder than they, continued to follow Jesus, and being seized by the crowd only escaped with the loss of his outer clothing.

383. *Peter's Three Denials.* St John xviii. 12-17; 25-27.

THE officers at once bind Jesus. And He, the stronger than Samson, submits to be led away in bonds like the worst of malefactors. They drag Him first before Annas, who sends them on without delay to Caiaphas the acting High Priest, himself shortly following. It was now about an hour after midnight. In the Hall of Council were already assembled many of the Chief Priests, Elders, and Scribes, waiting for the return of their officers. Not many days since Caiaphas had prophesied that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. St. John xi. 49-52. This night was to shew whether the sentence so eagerly passed could be put in force. Messengers would

be immediately despatched to summon the great Council of the Seventy. Meanwhile, those who are already met consult together and question with the prisoner. Besides these, a great crowd is assembled in the Hall. All who were concerned in the apprehension of Jesus are there, of right; and every moment others come surging in. By this time the disciples have in some degree recovered from their panic, and two of them have determined that, even though they cannot help their Master, they will at least be near Him. John, having friends in the household, has gained admittance for himself; and presently, with a word to the woman at the door, he brings in Peter who has been following afar off. A fire is burning at the lower end of the Hall, where the servants sit; and Peter, judging boldness to be the more prudent course, takes his place among them. But scrutinising and intelligent eyes are turned upon him, and soon the door-keeper, who had seen John bring him in, challenges him with—‘Thou also wast with this Nazarene Jesus.’ Taken by surprise, and anxious to remain as near his Master as possible, so as to be ready to go with Him to prison and to death, he puts off the inconvenient questioner with a denial. What can she mean? She is mistaken. He knows nothing of the man. But he feels that he has acted imprudently in setting himself thus forward among his Master’s enemies. He will go out into the porch, where he may see without being seen. As he passes, the cock crows outside. A warning indeed, if he had been in the spirit of watchfulness and prayer which his Lord had commanded. He heeds it not. His conscience is under the power of darkness, and he does not dream that the warning is being fulfilled, and that he has already denied Jesus a first time.

But he is no safer in the porch than he was in the Hall. Another of the women, on seeing him, exclaims to the bystanders,—‘This is one of them, one of the disciples of Jesus the Nazarene.’ Hastily he denies, this time with an oath; denies not only his discipleship, but his very knowledge of Jesus. An hour, it may be, passes, while the attention of the multitude has been directed to the examination going on at the end of the Hall. Peter, perhaps, has forgotten his danger, and has begun to talk with the others. His Galilean accent catches the ear of these people of Jerusalem, and again he is challenged as a disciple of Jesus by a kinsman of him whose ear he had cut off. Irritated and more than ever alarmed, he must stand by what he has said. With oaths and curses he denies the third time, more vehemently—‘I do not know the man.’

Yes, it is even as the Lord warned him: ‘This very night, even before cockcrow, thou shalt three times deny that thou knowest Me.’ And this was the disciple who was ready to go with his Master to prison and to death!

384. *Jesus before the Council.* St. John xviii.
19-24.

IN the meantime, while Peter has been observing, questioned, and denying, Jesus has been drinking new draughts of the Cup of suffering. Brought in chains before Caiaphas and the Jewish rulers, soon after midnight, He stands silent, as a sheep before her shearers, till they are pleased to question Him. Until the Council are assembled no regular trial of the prisoner can of course take place; but the Rulers already assembled may ask what they please. Possibly, they think, He may drop some

important information respecting His followers, so as to enable them to make further arrests. In His teaching He had said much concerning His Kingdom. They would like to know what His doctrine was ; what He meant by the Kingdom of which He so often spoke ; what His purpose was in gathering followers about Him ; who these followers were, of what rank and character, and where they were now to be found. Was He plotting any deep designs against the Temple—He had once spoken of destroying the Temple!—or was His design to excite a national revolt ? We can imagine with what a pretence of interest and goodwill the crafty Priest would put his questions, seeking to entangle Jesus in His words. But he has to deal with One who knew what was in man. Jesus replies simply, that His teaching had ever been open to all ; that it was addressed to the multitudes for their spiritual benefit, and not with the view of winning personal adherents ; that there was nothing underhand in all that He had said or done. Why does Caiaphas ask ?

The accused is turning upon the judge, even as the man born blind turned upon his tormentors. St. John ix. 27. What is the High Priest's design in asking—he who had been tracking Jesus for so long, laying wait for Him, setting his spies upon Him, day after day ? These spies of his have heard what Jesus has said. They know. Let their master ask them.

This reproof from the meek and helpless prisoner seems for the time to have touched the conscience of the judge, or, it may be, to have shamed him into ceasing from his malicious questions. But one of the officers, jealous for the honour of the High Priest, with the rude and ready cruelty so common

in those times, which treated every accused person as half condemned already, struck Jesus with the open hand : 'Dost thou answer thus disrespectfully to the High Priest ?' The last and lowest indignities now begin to be inflicted on the Son of God. He who was a little while ago comforted by the Angel is now smitten by a sinner. Can His glory endure this shame, His meekness extend so far as the patient endurance of this insult ? In His calm reply, so gentle even while claiming for Himself the consideration which is due to every unconvicted prisoner, He, so to say, turns the other cheek to the smiter. St. Matt. v. 39. 'This is the time,' He says, 'for bearing witness, not for punishing. Such a blow is unlawful, and thou knowest it.'

And now for an hour or so He is left in peace ; such peace as a man has who is alone, face to face with enemies thirsting for his blood, face to face with death ; and yet such peace as he only can have who is not alone because the Father is with him, who sees the Angels of God encamped about him to deliver him ; who, looking beyond death, hath Eternal Life.

- 385. *Peter's Tears and Repentance.* St. Luke
xxii. 61, 62.

THE High Priest had ceased questioning Jesus, and he was contented now to wait for the arrival of the other members of the Council. Jesus, still bound, His face bruised with the blow from the officer, stands at the upper end of the Hall, many curious eyes turned upon Him, many cruel and blasphemous words spoken against Him. It was now that Peter for the third time denied his Master, now that the second time the cock crew.

There is a difference here, hard to explain, be-

tween St. Mark's account and the others. While they speak of but one cock-crowing as well in the warning as in the denial, he, writing from Peter's lips, speaks of two. This no doubt is the more exact; it makes the denials the more sinful, inasmuch as the first, and promised, warning was disregarded. We suppose that our Lord in His warnings made both statements; the one referring generally to the third watch of the night ending at three o'clock, which was often spoken of as the 'cock-crowing,' St. Mark xiii. 35; the other to the more distinct and actual crowings of the cock. Peter, thinking thereon, would, even in his old age, recall the particular circumstances of that sad night; and the Evangelist, who wrote under his instruction, would relate them with the same fulness and distinctness.

But it was not even this second cock-crowing which recalled the disciple to himself. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. Crushed, one might have supposed, by His own sorrow and pain and shame, His heart was awake to the danger and the fall of His servant, was praying for him that his faith might not fail. Now that His warnings have been disregarded, and that Peter, presumptuously boasting, has three times miserably denied, Jesus turns. Is it to reproach? Is it to condemn? Is it to give effect to those awful words, 'Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven'? St. Matt. x. 33. No, He turns to bring to remembrance the warnings which He had spoken, to give repentance. The Eyes of the Lord, the Word of God, are living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. Heb. iv. 12. Happy they on whom those eyes are turned in love!

It was as the word of the Lord, which He spake, and all things were created. In that one moment the whole flashed into Peter's mind—the warnings, the boastings, the desertion, the three denials. It was a look of mighty Love, more than Peter could endure. He went out. But not as Judas went out. Won to a true penitence, to sorrow full of blessed hope, Peter went out to think over his sin, and to weep bitterly.

A history full of warning, and of encouragement! See where self-confidence and unwatchfulness have brought this great Apostle. See how they deafen the ears of the heart to warnings mercifully renewed while the sin is being repeated. Yet even for this worst of sins there is a place of repentance, if only the Face of Jesus be turned to us, and we go out to think over our fault, and to weep.

386. *Jesus condemned.* St. Matt. xxvi. 59-66.

IT was little before midnight that the Lord left the Upper Chamber, and passed to the Garden of Gethsemane. Allowing for His stay in the Garden and His walk to and from the city, He was in the High Priest's hall from between one and six o'clock in the morning. By this later hour the Council had assembled, Caiaphas had taken his seat, and the trial proceeds.

And here observe that the Jewish rulers cared nothing whether Jesus had conspired against Cæsar or not. Though that was their charge against Him before Pilate—for only on such a charge would Pilate have listened to them—their hatred of Jesus arose out of His claims to be a teacher greater than Moses. He had led away much people after Him. He had rebuked them for hypocrisy and covetous-

ness. He had offended their prejudices. He was claiming to be the Christ, the Son of God, making Himself equal with God. He must die. But they would observe all the outward forms of the law, and satisfy the people that He is justly condemned. Therefore they summon the Council, as the law required. They seek, from at least two witnesses, Deut. xvii. 6, evidence of a crime which all parties, Sadducees, Pharisees, and Herodians, shall agree in judging worthy of death. Trustworthy witnesses failing, they will accept any sort of evidence which may seem to establish the charge. And false witnesses come forward in plenty. Ps. xxxv. 11. Yet no two can exactly agree, even in their report of His few words concerning the destroying and the raising again of the Temple of His Body. St. John ii. 18-22. All this time Jesus is silent. Not a word has He spoken. This silence is especially irritating to the High Priest. Rising from his seat in his eagerness, he calls on Jesus to explain why so many are ready to come forward against Him; as if the multitude of false witnesses were proof of guilt. Still Jesus maintains silence; they are resolved on His death; to what purpose should He speak? Ps. xxxviii. 13, 14. Then, with all the authority of his high office, the High Priest puts Jesus on His oath; 'I adjure thee by the Living God, tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God.' No longer wasting time upon the lesser charges, Caiaphas comes directly to the great matter of all. Now Jesus can be no longer silent. Nor will He reply by questions or by parables. Jesus said, 'I am.' Again He has claimed for Himself the great Name of God. And that they may not have occasion to question further, or be in doubt as to His full meaning, He adds that the day will come when they,

His judges, shall see Him revealed in His power, the Son of Man of whom Daniel spoke, coming with the clouds of Heaven, Dan. vii. 13, 14; Son of Man, and therefore Son of God.

They could hardly have expected such an admission as this, for never had Jesus openly declared Himself the Christ. The High Priest, rending his clothes in horror, appeals to the Council. Is there any need of further evidence? He has spoken blasphemy in the hearing of us all. One more question is, however, put, lest there should be any mistake: 'Art thou then the Son of God?' 'Ye say that I am,' is the straightforward reply; that is, 'Ye have said the truth; I am the Son of God.' Upon this the sentence of death is passed by every voice.

387. *Jesus mocked and blindfolded.* St. Matt. xxvi. 67; xxvii. 2.

WITH one consent the Council pronounced for the condemnation of their prisoner. There was none to plead for Him. Neither Nicodemus nor Joseph of Arimathæa dared be present to-day. The former had once spoken in His behalf, St. John vii. 50, but in vain, and this morning it would have been hopeless to attempt to stem the tide of popular fury. While the members of the Council are formally giving their votes, the men that hold Jesus employ the interval in abuse and ill-treatment of their prisoner. In their coarser way they are only copying their employers. There is none to pity Jesus, bound and helpless as He is, exhausted with a night of agony and sleeplessness, faint and fevered for want of food and drink. Ps. lxi. 21. The one disciple who has dared to remain in the

High Priest's Hall cannot help Him. His enemies begin to mock Him, to beat Him, and to spit in His face. Then they blindfold Him, and with repeated blows go on to further ill-usage. With every blow and every insult their rage and bitterness grows fiercer. 'Christ, he calls himself, does he? A prophet too!' And with the blow came the jeering demand,—'Then prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee? If thou art Christ and prophet, this bandage over thine eyes will not hinder thee from seeing and naming the smiter.' And many other things blasphemously spake they against Him.

How awful is the thought that He whom they treated thus despitefully was the Son of God! And what shall we think of His silence, His patience, His endurance; His mighty Hands tied with thongs; His loving Face befouled with spitting, bruised with blows from the staff of one, and the open hand of another; His all-seeing Eyes darkened with the bandage; His all-knowing Spirit mocked with the challenge,—'Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?' 'Thou Christ!' there was the sting, as they fancied, of their mockery. He had called Himself Christ, and Prophet. Now He was exposed, stripped of His pretences, shewn for what He was worth! He could neither prophesy, nor deliver Himself. He was become a very scorn of men and the outcast of the people. O most patient Jesu, Thou art content to suffer thus in the house of Thy friends! And this is but the beginning of Thy sufferings!

The votes are given. The sentence is for death. For He hath spoken blasphemy. Lev. xxiv. 16. But the Romans are the masters of the country, and Pilate, they know, will not suffer any man to

be put to death for a matter of the Jews' religion. The Council, therefore, cannot separate yet. They must decide upon some charge upon which they may bring Him before the Roman Governor, and ensure His being executed. This is soon settled. A little further consultation, and they hurry Jesus away. The charge against Him now is that He has been conspiring against Cæsar, and trying to make Himself a king. In the face of this, Pilate can hardly let Him escape.

388. *The Chief Priests and Pilate.* St. John
xviii. 28-32.

THE Council of the Jewish Rulers, not having authority to put any man to death, have brought Jesus before the Roman Governor. A little while ago they had wished for delay, fearing to arrest Him on the Feast Day lest there should be a disturbance among the people. St. Matt. xxvi. 5. But the offer of Judas had removed this difficulty. Another thing helped them. During the last few days Jesus had lost much of His popularity. The multitude had followed Him from Bethany, thinking that He would at once head a party, and make Himself their king. But all that He had since done was to speak a few parables very galling and offensive to their Rulers in the Church. So the common people fell away from Him. Many of these were in the Hall, and have heard the sentence of death pronounced against Jesus. There has been no sort of disturbance; they are quite contented, and follow with the company who drag Him, His hands bound and a cord around His neck, from the Hall of the High Priest to the Palace of the Roman Governor. There is need of haste, for the Chief Priests want

to get home and eat the Passover, which they would have done last night, if they had not been occupied about Jesus. And they calculate that Pilate, out of respect to their office, will be satisfied with their report and demand, and will sign the sentence of death without entering into any examination.

They send in their message, carefully remaining outside. For Pilate's is a Gentile house; there is leaven yet there; and if they should enter they would become polluted, and might not eat the Passover. Thus they put the letter in place of the spirit of God's law; they will not enter a house where leaven may be found, but they do not mind killing a harmless man. The leaven is in their hearts, [the leaven of malice and wickedness. Pilate, a shrewd and cautious man, knowing how necessary it is to conciliate these excitable and turbulent people, and not wishing to have another riot, like that of Bar-Abbas, does not stand upon his dignity, but goes out to them. In a moment his quick eye seizes the meaning of the whole. They have brought a prisoner, and want authority for the execution. Well, at least he must know what the offence is. Acts xxv. 27. This they are not disposed to tell. It will open too many questions, and cause delay. Pilate must trust to them. The great Council of the nation would not have brought Him if they had not thoroughly satisfied themselves of His guilt. But this morning Pilate will not yield. Unjust and harsh as he was, at times, St. Luke xiii. 1, he bids them settle the matter in their own courts. This is trifling with them. For Pilate knows they may not carry out any sentence of death by themselves. They have given the man a fair trial, and on sufficient evidence have con-

demned Him. It is all right. Cannot Pilate sign their sentence, and give them authority to execute it ?

If the Jews had carried out their own law, the punishment would have been stoning. But Jesus had spoken long since of the Cross. And everything was happening exactly as He said. St. Matt. xx. 19 ; St. Mark x. 33. The Son of Man was first delivered to the Chief Priests and Scribes. They condemned Him to death, but could do no more. Therefore they delivered Him to the Gentiles that He might be put to death upon the Cross.

Pilate insists upon a definite charge. They, therefore, begin to accuse Jesus of conspiracy against the Roman government, and of an attempt to make Himself king. This is a very serious matter, and Pilate feels compelled to enquire into it.

389. *Pilate's First Conversation with Jesus.* St. John xviii. 33-38.

THEY who are so careful not to defile themselves by entering into a house where leaven might be, have no scruples about dishonesty and falsehood. It was not true that Jesus had turned the people from their obedience, or tried to make Himself a king, in the sense in which they represent it to Pilate. The charge that He had forbidden tribute to Cæsar was absolutely false. Pilate knew pretty well how far to believe them. But, having been some years in Syria, he had learned something of their religion and their expectation of Messiah who should be King. He may have heard of the visit and enquiry of the Wise Men, thirty years before. He must certainly have heard of the preaching and

miracles of this Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore he returns into the judgment-hall, and, calling Jesus, asks whether this part of the accusation is really true, whether He had ever professed to be the King of the Jews. Jesus replies with another question, 'Why does Pilate ask?' Does he, from his own heart, wish to know, or is the judge only taking up the words of others? The Lord might have revealed to the truth-seeking spirit what He hid from the questioning judge. Pilate scornfully denies any personal interest in the matter. Whatever it might be to the Jews, it was nothing to him whether he had before him the long-expected King or not. To him Jesus was no more than any other prisoner; and being accused He must answer the charge.

That answer is easily given. If Jesus had been seeking an earthly kingdom, His servants were strong enough to save Him from the Chief Priests. A kingdom, indeed, He has; but it is one not founded on any earthly power.

Pilate is puzzled. Can a man be in any sense a king with no more of a kingdom than this? 'Yes,' the Lord replies; 'thou sayest rightly, I am a King; King as ruling men's minds by the force of the truth which I teach. Every lover of the truth will acknowledge Me, and obey Me as his King.' The Roman Governor's attention turns from the accusers and the accused to the one great question which filled the mind of every thoughtful heathen, which he himself may have studied, in his earlier years, under some wise teacher. A man of rank and education, despising the whole Jewish system as a mixture of gross superstition and miserable formalism, he would listen to one who dared to profess himself a lover and teacher of truth. Pilate had met many such. But all had left him

in the old darkness. 'What is truth?' he asks again, asks more sadly and bitterly, one would think, than jestingly. And then, as if hopeless of an answer, he returns to the business on hand, and going out to the Chief Priests and people, he asserts the innocence of the prisoner.

'What is truth?' The truth was nearer to Pilate than he thought. With a little more earnestness and patience he might have won the answer given to the Woman of Samaria—'I that speak unto thee am He.' St. John iv. 26. How many there are now in the world who ask as he did, 'What is truth?' as if all were uncertain, and dark, and hopeless! If they would only ask humbly on their knees, and wait, instead of going out like Pilate, they may yet learn, to their eternal comfort, that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

390. *Jesus sent to Herod.* St. Luke xxiii. 4-12.

IN this short conversation Pilate had satisfied himself that Jesus was no disturber of the public peace, no fomenter of rebellion against his government. But when he went out to the Chief Priests and people, asserting the prisoner's innocence, he was appalled at the storm which greeted him. They were the more fierce, accusing Him of many things. Not a word will Jesus reply; not even to Pilate now, although He knows that Pilate is disposed to release Him. Pilate can do nothing. It comes out soon that Jesus is a Galilæan; if so, He ought to be judged by Herod. And as there was ill feeling existing between the two rulers, owing to Pilate having killed some of Herod's Galilæan subjects in the act of sacrificing, St. Luke iii. 1, the Roman will not be sorry thus to make

amends to the Jewish King by transferring the prisoner to him, and at the same time to relieve himself of a painful responsibility.

When Herod had first heard of Jesus, he was perplexed, doubting who He might be. And he desired to see Him. St. Luke ix. 7-9. Afterwards fear mingled with his curiosity, and he had threatened to kill Him. St. Luke xiii. 31-35.

Now that Jesus is brought as a prisoner before him, He will surely say and do all that the King desires. Herod, apparently, looked upon Jesus with an utterly worldly and profane spirit, as a sort of fortune-teller and conjuror, only too ready to shew off his powers of prophecy and miracle. Whatever of better feelings he had once cherished, as when he used to listen to John, and did many things, all have vanished now. He puts his eager and impertinent questions. To his surprise, not one word in answer; not one, though the accusers are vehement in their outcries. Herod's heart is utterly hardened. He will not be baulked of his amusement. If Jesus will not gratify them with a miracle, He must pay for His obstinacy. Let Him be treated for a little while as the king He claims to be. One of the royal robes is fetched, a robe of shining whiteness, and Herod and his captains join in the sport of mocking reverence to the King of kings. Weary at last of their insults to one who suffers all silent and unmoved, they send Him back to Pilate, still wearing the white robe as evidence of His visit. And in this way Pilate and Herod are made friends again. Herod had had his day of grace in John's preaching. But he kept his sin, and by-and-by murdered his truest friend. After that he would have listened as willingly to Jesus as he had to John. Yet only out of idle curiosity.

He did not want to hear what he must do to be *saved*. And so we come to this at last, that a man may have his better feelings, may enquire and hear much of Jesus, may wish to see Jesus and His miracles, may at last really see Him and ask Him many questions, and yet, after all, receive not one single word in answer. The only result of Herod's seeing Jesus is that he mocks Him with a blasphemous worship and denial of His claim to be King, and then renews a broken friendship by delivering Jesus into the hands of His murderers.

391. *The Silence of Jesus.* Isaiah liii. 7; 1 St. Peter ii. 20-23.

THREE times, during this night of suffering, our blessed Lord kept perfect silence in the face of cruel and false accusations. When the High Priest spoke with Him before the assembling of the Court, and, again, when Pilate asked Him privately of His kingdom, He did not refuse to reply; but as soon as the witnesses were called, He answered nothing. It was the duty of the judge to decide justly upon their evidence, without calling upon the prisoner to speak, if the witness broke down. Jesus, therefore, was under no real obligation to speak. Besides, He was perfectly aware that the Jewish Council had resolved upon His death; why, then, should He vainly seek to justify Himself? It was only when solemnly called upon by the High Priest, in the Name of God, to answer a particular question, that He broke the silence; and then not to justify or to defend Himself, but to set forth distinctly His real claim. If He had been silent then, men might have supposed that He withdrew His claim to be

the Christ, the Son of God. There was reason—nay, necessity—for His speaking then. He must tell them plainly that He is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, the Judge and King of all. So, alone before Pilate, He is willing to explain what His claim and His kingdom is. But as soon as Pilate resumes his office of judge, and the witnesses begin to accuse Him, He will speak no more. He will have nothing to do with explaining these lesser charges.

Again, when He is carried before Herod, He speaks not a word in answer to the many questions. For Herod cared neither to deal justly, nor to learn the truth. Accused before three different tribunals, Jesus keeps silence.

Did He care nothing for these charges, then? Certainly He did. Could He, the Prince of Peace, be accused of sedition and conspiracy, without feeling it? Could He, the Lord of the Temple, be accused of intending to destroy the Temple, without feeling it? He did feel them deeply. And how easy for Him to have shewn that they were false! But He answered nothing. He was content to suffer reproach and shame and dishonour, setting us an example of the patient endurance of evil. How quick we are to resent it when we are blamed, even justly! How quick to justify ourselves, to make excuses, to set ourselves in as good a light as we can! How we fret and complain about a few hard words! How little we can trust God to make our righteousness to shine as the light, and our just dealing as the noonday! Ps. xxxvii. 6. One by one, the Saviour takes up all the trials of earth and shews us how to bear them, and to make of them so many acceptable sacrifices to His Father, so many bonds of union with Himself. Wrongfully

accused, He kept silence, committing His cause to God. Can we not follow in His steps; justifying ourselves in case the honour of God and His Church be endangered, but otherwise contented to have all manner of evil spoken against us, falsely, for His sake? And then, great shall be our reward in Heaven. St. Matt. v. 11, 12.

392. *Jesus rejected; Bar-Abbas released.* St. Luke xxiii. 13-23; St. Matt. xxvii. 15-23.

MUCH to Pilate's annoyance the prisoner is again on his hands. Unwilling to condemn, he is afraid to release. Can he not contrive a middle course? Calling the Chief Priests and the Rulers around him, and the people also—for the outcry against Jesus had, so far, proceeded less from the people than from their rulers—he sums up what had been done. Herod agrees with him in thinking that their charges are not proved. He will gratify them so far as to have the prisoner scourged, and will then release Him. This he said, referring to the custom of releasing a prisoner at the Passover. This course would satisfy all parties. The people were already demanding this privilege, and Pilate would reckon upon their releasing the man by whose miracles they had, he understood, been so largely benefited. The better to attain his end, he will compel them to choose between Jesus and a certain Bar-Abbas, who now lay condemned for rioting and murder. If the Jewish rulers are really anxious for the public peace and the maintenance of the Roman power, they cannot consistently set this latter at large. He therefore puts the question formally from the judgment-seat: 'Which will ye that I release unto you, Bar-Abbas, or Jesus which is called Christ,

the King of the Jews?' These titles he adds contemptuously, as shewing how little he thinks of the claims they represent.

At this moment a message is brought from his wife, warning him to have nothing to do with that Just One. It is the very word applied to the Lord by the centurion at the Cross, and again by St. Peter in his second great sermon after the Day of Pentecost. St. Luke xxiii. 47; Acts iii. 14. In the past night she had been much distressed by a painful dream, and the first thing she hears on awaking is that this Just One has been accused before her husband. Had she heard of Jesus before, and known something of His character and work? We cannot tell. At any rate the dream has terrified her, as a message from God. And she takes the bold step of entreating her husband to set the prisoner free. Pilate was not one to receive such a message unmoved.

Strengthened in his resolution, he turns again to the people. But meantime the Chief Priests and Rulers have been busy among the crowd, with the persuasion of bribes, most likely, as well as argument; and when Pilate repeats his question, Bar-Abbas is chosen for release. What shall be done, then, with Jesus, this Christ, this King of the Jews? Pilate again scornfully repeats the titles. But it is no jesting matter. With one voice all demand that this Christ shall be crucified. In vain Pilate remonstrates: 'There is absolutely nothing proved against Him.' Still, to gratify them he will scourge Jesus before releasing Him. Will not that do?

Then the storm burst out in its utmost fury. More, more exceedingly, with louder cries, they pressed round the judgment-seat: 'Let Him be crucified!'

393. *Jesus rejected for Bar-Abbas.* St. Luke
xxiii. 13-23.

FIVE days before, Jesus had made His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem. At no seeking of His own a great multitude had come out to meet Him, and to attend Him into the Holy City, with shouts of welcome and rejoicing. They hailed Him as the Prophet of Nazareth, as He that should come, as the Son of David and the King of Israel. St. Matt. xxi. 8-11. If this had reached Pilate's ears—as no doubt it had—he might justly be surprised at the cry which now greeted his proposal to release Jesus. To-day the popular voice is all for death. People and Priests alike agree in preferring Bar-Abbas to Jesus—Bar-Abbas, the well-known robber, rioter, and murderer, to the innocent and the meek, the teacher and the benefactor! Many have thought that Pilate brought Bar-Abbas out of his prison and set him beside Jesus. This thought increases our horror. We see the two standing side by side, Jesus and Bar-Abbas, the Holy One and the murderer. Surely now, seeing Him pale and faint, His face defiled with the spitting and bruised with the buffetings, wearied with His sleepless night and His journeyings from one place to another, they will have pity. The worst of envy and of malice will be satisfied with Pilate's proposal to scourge Him and let Him go.

But there is no pity; not one moment's hesitation. The third time Pilate appeals, giving them time for reflection, but in vain. Their unanimous and final cry is, 'Let Him be crucified!'

There is something very striking and very terrible in the name of this man whom they preferred to

Jesus. Jesus was condemned because He said that God was His Father, because He made Himself Son of the Father. And what does Bar-Abbas mean but the very same, 'Son of the Father'? But of what father? The murderer must be of the devil—who was a murderer from the beginning. And they who choose the murderer, themselves seeking to murder an innocent man, must be his brethren, children of the same father, the devil. The Jews were proving the justice of Jesus' words. St. John viii. 40-44. They have rejected the Heavenly Bar-Abbas, the True Son of the True Father; they have chosen the hellish Bar-Abbas, the son of the devil. Truly He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.

We are astonished at their blindness, shocked at their perversity. But what if the prophet of God should speak to us in our indignation, as Nathan spoke to David: 'Thou art the man!' 'What!' we reply; 'can we have praised Jesus one day, and denied Him the next? Can we ever have chosen Bar-Abbas, and destroyed Jesus? What, then, mean the praises of our lips and the disobedience of our lives? What mean our Sunday Church-going and our week-day forgetfulness? What mean our delight in the pleasures of religion, our resistance of its precepts? They delivered Jesus, the Chief Priests for envy, Judas for covetousness, some for pride, some out of prejudice, some because they wanted to be on the world's side, some because His words condemned their favourite sins. Just so we, in our resistance to His laws, in our worldliness, our carelessness, our choosing our own way, reject Jesus for Bar-Abbas. And perhaps, but a day or two before our final rejection of Him, we may be shouting 'Hosanna' with the rest, and boasting

ourselves that we, at any rate, are found among His disciples, adoring Him as our King.

394. *The Scourging and the Crown of Thorns.*

St. John xix. 1-3.

‘**T**HEN Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him.’ ‘Therefore,’ because he would make one more appeal to their pity, and a public scourging would effectually end all claims, real or pretended, to the throne. Jesus is handed over to the Roman soldiers, who proceed to treat Him with the usual severity. Stripped and bound to the column, He gives His back to the smiters, and patiently endures the shame of nakedness and the agony of the scourge. The cruelty of a Roman scourging is hardly to be described. It left the person of the sufferer one great wound from head to foot. Better almost for him to die speedily than live to be cured. After the scourging, the soldiers take Jesus into the common Hall—Prætorium—where the whole band gather round Him. There they throw over His bleeding shoulders a scarlet or purple robe, some soldier’s cloak of the same colour that their emperors wore, taking the hint from Herod’s mockery. They will invest Him with all the marks of the kingly office. What shall serve for a crown? Some branches of a thorn-tree lie handy; twist them up; they will do. Now press them on His head; the thorns will catch the skin and hold it in its place. What if they tear the flesh? It is but another wound or two. Now for a sceptre! Fetch a reed. Though His hands are bound, they can hold the reed that it may lie upon His shoulder. That will do; kingly robe, and crown, and sceptre, all are there. Pay him all due homage of bended knee

and humble salutation—‘Hail, O King of the Jews!’ This cruel mockery of the helpless sufferer continues till they are tired. Then in utter brutality, they bring the game to an end; they spit in His face, they snatch the reed from His hand and strike Him with it, and drive the thorns into His bleeding brow. They are weary of jesting. They must torture Him afresh.

Thus was the Lord crowned; these were His courtiers; this His homage. Every part of His sacred Body had now received its share of shame and suffering. Isa. i. 6. He who was King of kings wears a crown of thorns. He who is clothed with light and glory is first stripped naked, then mocked with the robe of earthly greatness. He whose hands formed the heaven and the earth is bound to a pillar. He who is perfect love, is scourged almost to death. Why did He suffer in all these ways? Is it not because His love is so great, and we are so slow to believe in it? Is it not, again, because every part of our body is made to minister to sin, and He must suffer in every part to atone for our sin? We indulge our bodies; and therefore was He scourged, that by His stripes we might be healed.

And here again the falsehood is close upon the truth. Rightly was the kingly garment given to Him, and the sceptre, and the crown. Rightly was He worshipped as king. But oh! the bitterness of the mockery! Yet think awhile. What is thy worship of Jesus? Thou callest Him King and God, and bowest the knee before Him. But dost thou never, by thy sins, renew this awful mockery, and worse? The grief to Him is not that He suffered such things, but that He suffered them in vain; that those for whom He suffered them, even while

they pretend to weep, mock and insult Him afresh, and re-open His wounds, and spit in His face, even while they bend the knee and worship Him.

395. *Jesus given to be Crucified.* St. John xix.
4-15.

PILATE at last interferes. Now is the time for him to make one last effort. Bringing Jesus forth from the inner hall into sight of the crowd, he repeats his own settled conviction of His innocence, and bids them look at Him. This poor tortured, outraged figure, with his crown of thorns, his sceptre of reed, and scarlet cloak, is not one of whom Cæsar need be afraid, or Priests and Rulers be jealous. 'Behold the man!'

To their renewed demands for His crucifixion, he replies by refusing to be mixed up in it. If they choose to put Him to death, they must do it at their own peril, and may have to answer for it to Cæsar. They, therefore, bring forward one more argument. If they seem to be importunate, it is only in the wish to carry out their laws. He must die; for He has made Himself God's Son. Pilate, touched from the first with wonder and pity, and a certain awe, that awe being increased by his wife's message, is now more afraid than ever. Taking Jesus back again into the Hall of Judgment, he asks Him privately, 'Whence art Thou?'

The religion of the Romans had its traditions that the gods had occasionally come down from Heaven in the likeness of men. Acts xiv. 11-13. Little as he believed such tales, Pilate could not help feeling an awe of one who claimed a kingdom not of this world, founded upon the power of truth, and who suffered so meekly these cruel tortures.

Was Jesus, then, in very deed, a son of that great unknown God of the Jews? This question, like the former—‘What is truth?’—shews how Pilate’s mind was swaying hither and thither for good and for evil. Jesus is silent. That silence admits the claim. But Pilate’s pride is offended, and he endeavours to force a reply by threats. Then Jesus speaks. Against the Son of God Pilate could have no such power, if there were not a peculiar permission granted from on High. But on that very account the greater is the sin of Judas and the Jews; and all who shared in the deed would incur a share in the guilt.

Upon this answer, which seems to accept the title of Son of God, Pilate sought the more to release Him. But the Jews, knowing his anxiety to stand well with the Emperor, urge upon him that the release of Jesus will be betrayal of Cæsar. Pilate is not strong enough in his position to face this risk. Yet he makes another feeble effort. Taking his seat again on the Judgment-seat, on a raised platform of a Roman pavement, he brings Jesus once more before them, and bids them behold their King! Can they persist in believing that such a King can be dangerous to Cæsar, a King without a voice raised in His behalf? ‘Away with Him! Crucify Him!’ they reply. Pilate, indignant with himself, indignant with them, cannot refrain from sarcasm. ‘Would you have me crucify your King?’ ‘Yes,’ they reply. ‘We have no King but Cæsar.’ It was true. God had once been their King. They have denied Him now. Their king is a heathen. Ere long they know what it is to have such a king. 1 Sam. viii. 7, 19. Forty years later the Romans came and took away their place and nation. St. John xi. 48.

396. *Pontius Pilate.* St. Matt. xxvii. 24-26.

PILATE dares neither to thwart this unruly dangerous crowd, nor to disperse them by his armed guards. The first men of the nation are there, Chief Priests and Councillors, with a definite charge against the prisoner, to which he, as the representative of Rome, is bound to listen. And they have the people at their back, the great multitude who have come up from all parts to the Passover. Already signs of a tumult are perceptible, and if he resists longer, he may not be able to still it. He must yield. The little that he can do as a salve to his own conscience, he will. The whole crowd shall see that the sentence is forced from him. Sitting on the Judgment-seat, in view of all, he calls for water, and washes his hands, as to wash off from himself the blood of this just man. Certainly he has done his part. And he takes them to record that he is pure from blood-guiltiness; *they* must answer for it. They accept the challenge. Not one, but all, with one voice:—‘His Blood be on us, and on our children!’ Then he released unto them the man of their choice, Bar-Abbas, and delivered Jesus to their will.

There are names in Scripture with which certain awful sins are for ever associated: Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin, and Judas, which betrayed Him. With these Pontius Pilate henceforth has his place of infamy, in that he delivered Jesus to be crucified. Daily the Church, making mention of her Lord’s Death, tells that He suffered under Pontius Pilate.

Yet what was Pilate’s sin really?

Of all who were concerned in the murder of Jesus he seems to be the least in fault. We see a

man of rank, education, and refinement, a thoughtful man, to a certain extent just and humane, open to convictions, dragged on against his will, and only after long resistance, at great risk to himself, condemning his prisoner to death. Not one Roman Governor in a hundred would have taken the part of the prisoner as Pilate did. And yet, after all, he sinned this awful sin. How was it?

Because he was false to his own conscience. He knew that Jesus was innocent, and he ought to have set Him free at once. But he tried half-measures, tried to buy off the Jews by a lesser punishment equally unjust. Then he debated with them, instead of saying once for all that Jesus was innocent and must be released. Yielding a little, he was unable to stop. Then he admitted the consideration of worldly interest. If either he or Jesus must fall, it must be Jesus of course. Better one man die than have a riot! He will put the whole blame on these turbulent Jews. And so he yielded to the pressure of circumstances.

Do we never sin in the same way—play false to our consciences, try half-measures, palter with the temptation instead of resisting absolutely, yield a little for the sake of worldly peace and gain, and end by committing the sin and trying to put the blame upon another or on the pressure of circumstances? It is thus the greatest sins have been committed, by those who never meant to commit them, and yet have committed them after all.

397. *The Procession to Calvary.* St. Matt. xxvii. 38-42; St. Luke xxiii. 25-31.

IT was between six and nine o'clock when Pilate finally delivered Jesus into the hands of the Roman soldiers. With renewed mockery they strip

the scarlet robe from His bleeding back, tearing open the wound afresh, and lead Him away to the place of crucifixion. And He, bearing His Cross, went forth, distinguished only by His crown of thorns from the two who have been brought out of prison to die with Him. Utterly exhausted by the sufferings of the past night, He falls under this heavy load; but no one will stoop to relieve Him, or even to share in the burden. As yet there were none, not even among the disciples, who could glory in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. At that moment a stranger, Simon of Cyrene, passed by; him they compel to carry the Cross under which Jesus has fainted. A most unwelcome task at the time! But afterwards what was it to him? We think of him as spectator of all the awful events of that day. St. Mark speaks of him as the father of Alexander and Rufus, men well known to the readers of his gospel thirty years later. Was this African the same as Simeon which was called Niger, or black, one of the prophets and teachers at Antioch fifteen years after? Acts xiii. 1. If the touch of the Lord's garment could heal, we cannot doubt but that the touch of His Cross would bring blessing likewise, and that this day Simon bore the Cross after Jesus to the obtaining all its gracious promises. St. Matt. xvi. 23, 24.

And now at last a voice of compassion is heard. In the great crowd which followed there are some, the women chiefly, who, either remembering His gracious words and works, or struck with His marvellous patience and dignity, are not afraid to bewail and lament for Him. These are not the Galilean women who ministered to Him of their substance, but comparative strangers, women of Jerusalem. He turns to them, He who had kept

silence so often during this night, and bids them weep not for Him but for themselves. The day will come, He warns them, when under their own sorrows they will wish that they had never been mothers, that they had never been born. If these sufferings fall upon Him, the beloved Son of God, the green tree, Hos. xiv. 8, what shall be the end of those in whom is no life, those who have just desired that the Blood of the Son of God shall be upon them and their children for ever?

Does our Lord then find fault with the tears of pity shed for Him? Far from it. He had sought the sympathy of His disciples. The Psalms and Prophecies speak of Him as looking for some to have pity on Him. Ps. lxix. 20; Lam. i. 12. He Himself wept with those who wept; He wept over Jerusalem in the thought of her coming destruction. What He would have is a *thoughtful* sorrow. Those who had welcomed Him a few days before had this day clamoured for His death. So in like manner the tears of to-day might turn speedily to forgetfulness, if not into contentment at His death. Let them look deeper, and weep for that which was causing His death—the refusal of His people to go to Him for salvation, their rejection of His mercy, their sin in crucifying Him, for which God would soon bring upon themselves and their children an utter destruction. We may not weep tears of pity for Jesus without also weeping tears of shame and repentance for the sins which crucified Him.

398. *The Repentance of Judas.* St. Matt. xxvii.
3-10; Acts i. 15-20.

WHERE were the disciples through all this?
Near enough to know of His condemnation,
and to watch the sad procession pass to Calvary.

John was with the Blessed Mother of Jesus; Peter weeping bitterly; all alike amazed, fearful, and sorrowful. All except Judas. He stood alone. He had avenged himself. He had received his price. And it had turned, as it were, to fire in his hands. As with our first parents on their sin, their eyes were opened and they knew, so with him. The devil had entered into him, and held his eyes and his heart till the deed was done. Then, when it could not be undone, his eyes were opened. He was left to the tortures of his guilty conscience. Thus it is that men find the long-desired sin to be but gall and ashes in their mouth.

Judas sees all now. He has slain an innocent man. But it does not appear that he understood that it was the Lord's Christ whom he had betrayed; for faith in Jesus as the Christ was a special gift not granted to the evil-doer. Now he repented, but with remorse and despair, and the sorrow which worketh death. 2 Cor. vii. 10. Life is more than he can endure. First, he must get rid of this money. Taking it back to the Chief Priests, he bears his witness to the innocence of Jesus. For that they care nothing. They have paid him his price. If he regrets it, that does not concern them. Such is the pity which the sinner may expect from those who hire him to work their wickedness. They leave him to stand alone, in his terror and despair.

Forsaken by God and man, the betrayer of Jesus casts away from him the money for which he had sold his Master and sold his own soul. He cannot even ask for pardon. His repentance has no faith, no hope. Like a second Cain, Gen. iv. 13, 14, hurrying from the Temple, the House and Presence of God, he went and hanged himself. A further circumstance of horror is mentioned in the Acts,

ch. i. 18. The body of the suicide fell headlong, we suppose by the breaking of the rope, and all his bowels gushed out.

Again we are struck by the religious scruples of the Chief Priests. These men, who have brought about the execution of Jesus by bribery and false witness, refused to enter into a Gentile's house lest they should be polluted, and now will not put this money into the Treasury, because it is the price of blood. They devote it, therefore, to the purchase of a burying field for strangers and proselytes, and it is known ever after as Acel-dama, the field of blood. In this, too, was fulfilled a prophecy, which stands now, for the most part, in the writings of Zechariah ; ch. xi. 12, 13 ; but is supposed to have been first spoken by Jeremiah, and afterwards written by the later prophet.

There is the end of Judas. He had succeeded in his designs. He had done his work and gained his reward. He had crucified Jesus. A little more, and utter misery of spirit is his ; the ill-gotten gain is thrown away. He dies by his own hand, accursed ; for he that is hanged is accursed of God. Deut. xxi. 23. And his soul is gone to its own place. He had not even gained his thirty pieces of silver. And he had lost his own soul.

PART XV.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

399. *Jesus nailed to the Cross.* St. Matt. xxvii.
33-38.

THE sad procession has at last reached the place of execution, known as Golgotha, the place of a skull; so called, it may be, from the skulls and remains of the criminals there put to death, or, possibly, only as being a round bare hill. It was outside the walls of the city, we know, probably on the north-west. Outside the city the Saviour chose to die, that He might be known to lay down His life not for the Jews only but for all the world; and on the Cross He chose His death, lifted up in the air that He might meet and conquer the Prince of the power of the air, Eph. ii. 2; and that by His outstretched arms He might seem to draw all men unto Him. St. John xii. 32. In the Roman executions a strange pity was mingled with their horrible cruelty. They were willing to stupefy their criminals to a certain degree, to drug them and benumb their senses against the coming agony. For this purpose wine, mingled with myrrh, and rendered more nauseous by the admixture of gall, was offered to the Lord. But He drank not of it. For while suffering all things, He would retain consciousness, and drink to the dregs the full bitterness of the cup.

The soldiers then proceeded to strip Him of His raiment, once more tearing open the wounds of the scourging. And there they crucified Him.

We are so familiar with the word, that some of us, perhaps, hardly understand what Crucifixion really was. And sometimes we shrink from dwelling upon the Saviour's pains of body in His Crucifixion, and so too quickly pass over this awful scene. Indeed, the Scripture account is so very brief, that we who have never seen a crucifixion might easily fail to understand it. Happily now the painted windows in our Churches, the pictures in our books of devotion or upon our walls, or the representation of our Crucified Lord in carved wood, or metal, or other substance, prevent anyone from being entirely ignorant about it. Yet, even with these before our eyes, it is hard to realise all the shame and all the agony of this punishment.

To be stripped naked after cruel scourging, to be laid all wounded upon the rough hard wood, to have the hands and feet, where most of all a blow or wound is keenly felt, pierced with the nails, and the nails driven into the wood by repeated blows, each blow jarring through the whole frame—then the Cross lifted up so as suddenly to throw the whole weight of the body on the pierced hands and feet, and dropped into the hole dug for it with a shock sufficient to rack every joint, and almost to tear through the wounded flesh and nerve—this was only the beginning of Crucifixion. Hour after hour might pass with ever-increasing agony, and fever, and raging thirst, yet death was hardly nearer then. Often the day would darken into night, and night glow into day, and a third day might follow in its course to find the sufferer still alive and conscious. This was Crucifixion—long, long hours of keenest

agony, which Jesus bore for us. There they crucified Him ; for us !

And with Him they crucify the two robbers ; on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

400. *Father, Forgive them.* St. Luke xxiii. 34.

TO suffer silently contempt and pain is a power rarely attained by man. But the example of Jesus, like His precept, leads us higher still. In this keenest shame and agony He prays for His murderers : ‘ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ So, afterwards, prayed the first martyr, Stephen, Acts vii. 60 ; so prayed James, the Lord’s brother, Bishop of Jerusalem, martyred also in the last days of that wicked city. So Jesus shews Himself truly the Son of the Father which is in Heaven, and they follow in His steps as dear children of the same Father. St. Matt. v. 45.

‘ Father’—He begins. That title and relationship which had given them occasion against Him, He makes to be the strength of His intercession. He calls God His Father, to their great gain. ‘ Forgive them ;’—He remembers not that He is dying at their hands, only that He is dying for them, and He would not that His death should be in vain for any. ‘ For they know not what they do ;’—this was most especially true of the Roman soldiers ; true also of the Jews ; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Acts iii. 17 ; 1 Cor. ii. 8. It is a plea for all, for Romans, for Jews, for Christians, for all who sin, not knowing the greatness of their sin, even for those who might have known, but do not choose to know. And was not the prayer answered ? That very day forgiveness was extended to the penitent thief and to the

Roman Centurion; that very day many, beholding that great sight, with the darkness and the earthquake, went away smiting their breasts. St. Luke xxiii. 47, 48. That day repentance was begun to many, to bear fruit in the forgiveness and washing away of sin on the day of Pentecost. Acts ii. 38. And is not that prayer over us still, even on us, who too many of us, and too often, crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to open shame? Certainly that prayer avails for us also. But let us remember that even this wonderful forgiveness may be sinned away, and the prayer of the dying Lord be made of none avail to us. Heb. vi. 4-6. Forty years later, they for whom He prayed, in the ruin of their city, in their mutual slaughter, and in the death of so many thousands on the cross, learned that God is a righteous as well as a merciful Judge. They knew not now; but they ought to have known. They knew not even in the end; because they refused to learn.

Moreover this prayer, while it gives us comfort, gives us also an example, especially for our death-beds. Then, drawn near to God's awful judgment-seat, and crying out for mercy on our own sins, we must first forgive all who have offended us. Only so can we hope to be forgiven. These words of His,—'Father, forgive them,'—to which we cling for ourselves, must be the dying man's prayer even for his bitterest enemies. But how shall we be able to pray that prayer from an honest and true heart then, unless we are practising forgiveness all our life long? Therefore does the Lord teach us to forgive, even as we pray for daily forgiveness, lest we, asking for forgiveness of the ten thousand talents, should yet fail to win it, because we cannot forgive our brother his debt of a few pence.

401. *The Raiment of Jesus parted among the Soldiers.* St. John xix. 23, 24.

TO the Roman soldiers the crucifying of the Son of God was no more than any ordinary execution. They knew no difference between Jesus of Nazareth and the two robbers who were hanging one on either side of Him. These rough untaught men went through their cruel work with hard indifference, and as soon as they had got the Cross into its place, they proceeded to part His garments among them. For the clothing of the criminal became, by right of custom, the property of his executioners. There was little to divide, and that little was of no great value—a poor man's outer and inner garment. Of no great value in their eyes, that is ; yet these garments had brought healing to more than one poor afflicted creature. St. Luke viii. 46 ; vi. 19. Through them power had passed from the Body of Jesus to heal the painful and long disease. But that was to the touch of faith. These men handled them carelessly, profanely ; and to them no blessing comes. Oh, the difference between the prayer of faith, and the thoughtless repetition of holy words ! Oh, the difference between seeing only the Bread and Wine, and discerning the Lord's Body, between the worthy and the unworthy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ !

The outer garment, a large square of woollen cloth, was easily torn into four and divided among the soldiers. Not so the inner garment, a long, closely-fitting tunic or frock. That they find to be of an unusual make, woven in one piece throughout, the gift, it may be the work, of the Lord's Mother, or of one of the Galilæan women. To tear

this seamless garment was to spoil it. Therefore they must cast lots whose it shall be.

So, doing their own pleasure, they are fulfilling the prophecies of God. These things, *therefore*, the soldiers did. St. John uses this word '*therefore*' several times in his account of the Lord's Passion. And why? Not simply by reason of the earthly causes from which the different events seem to take their rise, but because thus only could the Scripture be fulfilled. It was written in the Prophets, 'I gave my back to the smiters.' Isa. l. 6. Pilate *therefore* took Jesus and scourged Him. It was written in the Psalms, 'They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.' Ps. xxii. 18. 'These things *therefore* the soldiers did.' And so in many other things which took place in the life and death of Jesus. Because they had been foretold, *therefore* He did and suffered such things; that men, studying the prophecies, and seeing their fulfilment in Him, might recognise Him as the Christ of God.

The outer garment, torn into four parts, has ever been taken as a type of the Church spreading into the four quarters of the earth; the inner garment, one piece woven throughout, as a type of the Church in her oneness. Thus the ancient fathers, writing upon this passage, tell us that in the sign of this seamless garment the Lord Jesus declares to us the unity of His Church, and that they who break away from the Church and cause divisions, rend the coat of Christ, and are worse than these heathen soldiers. For these knew not what they did.

402. *The Title on the Cross.* St. John xix. 19, 20 ;
St. Matt. xxvii. 33-43.

ONE more thing was to be done before the executioners' work was finished ; the charge upon which Jesus was condemned must be placed upon the Cross above His head, that all men might see it. Pilate, angry with the Jews, with Jesus, and with himself, has written the title, and it is set up accordingly : ' This is Jesus, the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.'

There were three languages in Syria at that time, Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Every one who passed by would be able to read one, if not all, of these languages. And Pilate had the accusation written in all three. He intended it as a bitter jest upon the Jewish rulers, a jest which might be told far and wide. The last time that he had brought Jesus out unto the people, he had said : ' Behold your king ! Shall I crucify your king ? ' And they had replied, as still imputing worldly ambition and conspiracy to Jesus, that He had made Himself a king, and deserved to be punished ; but as for them, they will have no king but Cæsar. This was their final decision and choice. Jesus they will not have ; nor any but Cæsar. Pilate, scornful and provoked, mocks their new affection for Cæsar by publishing the claims of Jesus. Stung with the insult, they apply to Pilate to alter the wording. Will he not prefix a word or two, enough to make it clear that it was Jesus who said, ' I am King of the Jews,' and not they who gave Him the title ? Pilate sends them away at once. Not a syllable shall be added, or changed.

Nevertheless, Pilate's bitter mockery was no more

than simple truth. Jesus of Nazareth was indeed King of the Jews ; King by royal descent of David's line ; King by prophecy ; King by the anointing of the Holy Ghost ; King by His own power and might ; King as Son of God. And King of the Jews, of the spiritual Israel of God. As the High Priest had prophesied, not of himself, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, St. John xi. 50—a word of worldly policy, as he intended it, but really a divine truth—so Pilate, in his bitter taunt, spoke and published another truth equally divine. Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the King of the Jews. Pilate is but declaring the truth unto the world.

The Roman soldiers had now done their part, and for awhile took no interest in the scene. Sitting down, they kept their watch, that none should rescue Him. A great crowd stood looking on, some pitying, some wondering, some careless, some mocking. These last, as they pass by under the Cross, take up the words which had been charged against Him : ' He saved others ; Himself He cannot save.' This, too, this mockery of theirs, is equally truth. For only by His death can He save others. If He is to save them, He cannot save Himself. It is His love for souls which binds Him to the Cross. There He must hang, until He has laid down His life.

So they taunt Him, so they tempt Him, as the devil had tempted Him. ' If He be what He professes to be, Christ, the Son of God, let Him prove it by a miracle ; let Him come down from the Cross ; then we will believe in Him.' Bound and straitened by His love for the world, He could not save Himself and come down. At last the Roman soldiers, wearied with doing nothing, join in, offering Him

vinegar; and even the robbers who were crucified with Him cast the same insults in His teeth. It is the way of the world to trample on the man who is already prostrate and crushed.

403. *The Penitent Thief.* St. Luke xxiii. 39-43.

TO all these revilings and blasphemies the meek and patient Jesus answered never a word. One of the thieves, maddened by his sufferings, presently breaks out again in insult and reproach: 'If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us.' The other hears, but can join no longer in these bitter words. The meekness and evident innocence of Jesus has touched his heart. He first rebukes his companion for his cruel abuse of one who had done nothing amiss. Then, turning to Jesus, he asks for himself, 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom.' The prayer is heard and accepted. 'Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt Thou be with Me in Paradise.'

In every age of the Church thousands of sinful and penitent souls have listened to this story, and have found comfort. It is, indeed, a signal instance of full and free forgiveness, sought and found at the eleventh hour. But it is not merely *forgiveness* that we see. Look deeper yet; mark the mighty power of grace. Otherwise there is danger lest we forget that it is also a signal instance of a perfect conversion.

For the promise is not, as some would have us believe, won from Jesus by one hasty cry for help. In one short hour the robber's whole character had experienced an entire change. It was in will and desire perfected. He was already bringing forth 'fruits meet for repentance, worthy fruits of faith.

Do we look for sorrow and confession of sin? They are here: 'We, indeed, suffer justly.' Do we look for faith? He confesses Jesus before men, as his Lord and King. Do we look for love? He defends Jesus, speaking the only words which have been spoken on Calvary on His behalf. Do we look for hope? He asks for remembrance when Jesus shall come in that Kingdom of which He had spoken before the High Priest, in the glory of His Father with the Holy Angels. For he was too near death to look for any earthly glory. A prayer of hope, yet of humility also! He asks for nothing, only to be remembered. Nailed thus to the Cross, his heart and his tongue were all he had to give, and these he gave, unreservedly. Yet he had received no direct encouragement. How could he expect, if Jesus were indeed the King of Glory, to be accepted among His chosen ones? He does not stop to reason on this. He believes; he prays; he is heard.

Here was indeed a wondrous work of Divine grace, a perfect conversion. And his prayer was answered immediately. Verily—as with an oath, the promise is sealed, the restful, glorious home is at once assured to him: 'Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.' And who more worthy to be with Jesus there than he, who alone, at this sad hour, dared to call Him 'Lord'? St. John xii. 26.

We gather comfort from the promise to this poor repentant robber, blessed comfort, blessed assurance, that the Love of Christ is always drawing sinners if only they will run after Him, even to the last! Cant. i. 4. But even with the comfort there is warning. While this one was saved, what of the other thief? Therefore let none presume. Rather let them, by His grace, perfect their repentance, lest their heart be hardened. Heb. iii. 13. For if we

remember not our Redeemer in the day of grace, how shall He remember us, except to punish, when He cometh in His Kingdom ?

404. *The Mother of Jesus at the Cross.* St. John
xix. 25-27.

OF all whom Jesus loved, of all who had so often professed love for Him, were there none loving enough and bold enough to be near Him now ?

Yes ; the one disciple who had lingered in the High Priest's Hall till the sentence was given, who seems to have watched every act of that terrible night and morning, he was there ; and with him there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother, with Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. We think of the beloved disciple carrying to the holy women the sorrowful tidings that their worst fears were realised, and that Pilate had given Jesus up into the hands of His enemies. In their humble lodging they would hear the tramp and the shouts of the crowd as it passed through the narrow street, and they would perhaps hurry away and fall in with the procession ere it reached the place of execution. Now, indeed, was Simeon's prophecy fulfilled ; now was the sword piercing through her soul. St. Luke ii. 35.

The Holy Spirit has thought fit to cast a veil over the words and actions of the Blessed Mother of Jesus. We know that, being highly favoured, and blessed, the chosen Mother of the Son of God, she must stand nearest of all in character to her Divine Son. Yet we scarcely see her except as one perplexed, or checked, or disappointed, or, as now, pierced through with sorrows. Her whole character is told in her own words : ' Behold the handmaid of

the Lord ; be it unto me according to Thy word.' To do and to suffer according to God's will, that was her law. We think of her as self-disciplined by meditation and prayer and humility, strengthened by faith and love, for all that should be laid upon her. The prophecies of the Passion and the Cross which He had spoken to the Twelve, He would, of course, also have told to her. Now the time has come. And in spite of the danger, in spite of the agony of spirit, she will be with Him through all ; like Abraham, not withholding her only Son whom she loved from the Altar of Sacrifice.

And was this nothing to Him, to Him who loved her with more perfect love than ever son could feel for mother ? See how, with the salvation of the world in His hands, He has yet thought for her, in death as in life sanctifying the affection of parent and child. It is not beneath Him to think of His Mother, even at this hour, in the strife and the agony. She is still His Mother, revered and beloved. He commits her, from whom He had drawn His earthly being, to the disciple who, as loving and beloved, was most like to Himself. John is henceforth to be to her a son. And to John she is to be a mother, looking to him for that support and comfort which a mother has the right to demand.

Who after this would undervalue the pure affections and duties of the family life ? Who would dare to think that the thought and care for loved ones left behind is aught but sacred in the eyes of the Great Father of all ? And shall we not think ever with loving and reverent affection of her whom Jesus thus cared for, bending down from the Cross, the Mother pierced through with sorrow upon sorrow ; comforted by the Christ-like St. John, for he best could feel with her in her be-

reavement; his mother and ours; now enjoying the perpetual joy and felicity in the presence of Him who is her Lord and her God, and yet for evermore her Son?

From that hour that disciple took her to his own home. O blessed privilege thus to minister to the Mother of Jesus! Yet we too may do the same in ministering to them who do the will of God; and so we shall minister to Him. St. Mark iii. 35.

405. *The Darkness and Desolation.* St. Matt.
xxvii. 45-48.

THE morning has dragged on like any other day, except to these sad sufferers in body and mind, and it is now noon, the brightest hour of the bright spring day. But a change takes place, enough to appal the stoutest, to quiet the fiercest, of the enemies of Jesus. Darkness covers the whole land of Judæa. This was no eclipse; for it was the time of the full moon, when sun and moon are in the opposite quarters of the heavens. It was a divinely-sent darkness, a fulfilment of the prophecy, that the Lord should cover the sun with a cloud, and cause the sun to go down at noon, and darken the earth in the clear day. Ezek. xxxii. 8; Amos viii. 9.

This was the beginning of those terrible signs by which Heaven and earth seemed to shew their awe and their pity at the murder of the Son of God; to be followed presently by the earthquake, and the rending rocks, and the opening graves.

This darkness without was a type of the darkness and desolation which overspread the Soul of Jesus, and at last found expression in His cry of agony—'My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

Of all the words spoken by the Son of God, these are the most wonderful. Only last night He had spoken of His oneness with the Father. St. John xvi. 23; xvii. 21-23. How then shall we explain this cry of anguish?

St. Paul tells us that Jesus spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them on the Cross. Col. ii. 15. This must mean that the conflict was renewed now, that Satan, taking advantage of the tortured mind and body of Jesus, renewed his assaults, and, being again vanquished, revenged himself by most sorely afflicting the Son of God. And at this moment the consolations of the Father's sustaining presence were so far withheld, that the Son of God cried with a loud voice, 'My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

But it is not possible that God the Son should be separated from God the Father. What we understand is, that in this awful hour no consolation flowed down from the Father, no support was given from the Divine Nature, to the fainting soul and body of the man Jesus.

Why was He so forsaken?

Because He would shew us that He bears part in all the punishment of sinners, in the most terrible of all sufferings, the anguish of mind which rises from the hiding of God's countenance, the sense of being forsaken by God.

Because He would shew us that we are not even then to despair, but that we may say, in the darkest hour, not only 'God,' but 'My God,' believing that He is still ours and that we are still His.

Because He will shew us what an awful thing it is to be forsaken by God, and by warning and encouragement draw us closer to Him.

Because He would comfort us, for ourselves and

friends, in the hour of death, shewing us that even when there is a dimness over the soul, the Presence of God is only clouded over, not withdrawn for ever; that though for a small moment He may forsake, yet that with great mercies will He gather us. Isa. liv. 7, 8.

My God! My God! Thou hast not forsaken me!
Grant me that I may never in life or death forsake Thee!

406. *The Thirst of Jesus.* St. John xix. 28, 29.

FOR three hours the miraculous darkness shrouded the whole land as a funeral pall for the dying Redeemer. Darkness covered the earth; a grosser darkness covered the people, that even then they could not know Him. And over His Spirit lay the darkness of suffering, the clouding of the Father's Light, wringing from Him His loud cry of anguish. Some of them that stood by, hearing the word 'Eli,' either by misapprehension or in mockery, supposed that He was calling upon the great Prophet Elijah to come and deliver Him.

The worst was now over. He had borne all, willingly, patiently. As the darkness passed away at the ninth hour, so light beams once more upon the anguished soul of Jesus. His bodily suffering now makes itself felt, the burning thirst which follows upon the severe pain of the wounds.

Still He does not ask for relief impatiently. In all this agony and faintness of body, His spirit yet sees all and considers all. And in order that another prophecy shall be fulfilled, Jesus saith, 'I thirst.' Ps. lxix. 21. A Roman soldier, probably one of the four who had divided His clothing, pityingly fills a sponge with vinegar, and putting

it upon a reed of the hyssop-plant, raises it to His lips. This merciful action displeases the Jewish bystanders. 'Let him be,' they cry. 'He has called for Elias. Let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.'

'I thirst.' It is not till He has cared for others that Jesus thinks and speaks of Himself; and then it is that He may, in the fulfilment of one more prophecy, give a fresh sign. This cry bears witness to the pains of His body, as His last cry tells of the anguish of His soul. In it He sanctifies the cry of human suffering, shewing us that we may complain, that we may ask for alleviations and remedies and comfort, without any failing of resignation to our Father's will.

Is there not also a spiritual meaning in His thirst? Did not His whole soul thirst just now for the living God? Does not His whole soul thirst always for the salvation of mankind? From all eternity He had thus thirsted for us, and for our love.

And what was given to Him in His hour of bodily thirst? Not the clear cool water from the spring, but the vinegar, the sour wine, bitter with the hyssop. There is the type of His people. As the prophets had said: Ephraim is turned to idols; his drink is sour; their grapes are grapes of gall; their clusters are bitter. Hos. iv. 17; Deut. xxxii. 32. Yes, and such is the return we too often make to His love. Looking down upon us from His Cross, He says, 'I thirst.' And we, returning His love by seeming service, which is really but neglect, if not hate, what do we put to His thirsting lips but vinegar and hyssop, sourness and bitterness?

'I thirst!' He thirsted for us, that we might thirst for Him. Oh that we could say with the

Psalmist, 'My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God!' Then would He lead us to the waters, to the living waters, that we might never thirst again. Else it may end with us as with the rich man, to thirst, being in torments, for one drop of water, one moment of refreshing grace, and then to thirst in vain.

407. *It is finished.* St. John xix. 30.

WE remember that the Lord had said, 'No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.' St. John x. 18. He waited only to finish His work. That work was now accomplished. Therefore He might now lay down His life.

'It is finished.' To this He had been looking from all eternity. This had been upon His human spirit even from His youth upward. To this He had looked forward with a mysterious eagerness and thirst. St. Luke xii. 50. The long waiting of those thirty years, the lifelong obedience, the ministry of word and deed, the agony, the shame, must be finished before the death should put the crown of perfectness upon them. Now was come the moment of rest and refreshment, of victory, and joy, and attainment. It is the cry, not of the conquered, but of the conqueror. He had triumphed over His enemies in the Cross. The life of obedience, made perfect by suffering, was ready to be offered in sacrifice by death.

All types and prophecies are finished too. The things concerning Him had had their end. Many of the circumstances of His death in their natural course helped forward the fulfilment. The Jewish people and their Rulers, Judas and the Chief priests, the Council and the Roman Judge, the

rabble and the soldiers, all these, unconsciously, fulfilled in Jesus the types given long ago, the prophecies spoken in old time. We can see, though they could not, and cannot to this day, the foreshadowing of Jesus in Abel and Isaac, in Jacob and Joseph, in Moses and David and Solomon; we can read of Him in the Law, and the Psalms, and the Prophets. We can recognise Him in the Lamb of the Passover, in the Scape-goat, in the Brazen Serpent, and in the Sacrifices of Sin-offering, and Burnt-offering, and Meat-offering.

All His work is finished. He had been sent into the world the Preacher, the Healer, the Comforter, the Prophet, Priest, and King of men. Now is finished all that Eternal Wisdom has decreed, all that Eternal Justice has required, all that Eternal Love has provided. The salvation of the world is won.

We, too, must come one day to our death-agony, and then His words,—‘It is finished,’ will be true of us. But how far true? Life will be finished, the day and means of grace, all our time and opportunities; finished in the sense that we cannot add to what we have done, or take from it; unfinished so far as we have left it imperfect, or have loaded it with sin. Who of men will be able then to look back, and not mourn some duty neglected, some fault marring the work which should have been perfect and entire, wanting nothing? Thanks be to God, it is not finished yet! We have still time and opportunities; the way of pardon open, the day of grace prolonged, the hour of work giving space for amendment. Let us hasten in faith and repentance, in humility and diligence, to correct what is amiss, to supply what is wanting, to stablish that which is weak, that when life draws to its

close, and our work is finished, it may, for Jesus' sake, be accepted of the Father.

408. *Jesus commends His Spirit to His Father.* .
St. Luke xxiii. 46.

ALL being finished, Jesus commends His spirit into His father's hands. He cried with a loud voice, as shewing that His life was not taken from Him, and that, had He so pleased, He might yet longer have resisted Death. It was rather that He took Death than that He was taken by Death; He the Conqueror, Death the conquered.

The Church has preserved a tradition, that the Lord began the twenty-second Psalm in the words, 'My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?' and repeated that and the following Psalms until, with this, the sixth verse of the thirty-first, He commended His spirit to the Father. We are sure that He spent those weary hours in prayer, and intercession, and in communion with the Father. What more likely than that He should take David's Psalms for His Prayer-book? And what more fitting words for any dying disciple than these? St. Stephen makes them, in a measure, his own. Acts vii. 59. So does St. Paul in view of approaching death. 2 Tim. i. 12. So St. Peter suggests them as the model for suffering Christians. 1 St. Peter iv. 9. Can we do better than pray thus for ourselves, and for our friends, in the awful moment of the soul's departure?

The terrors of the desolation and loneliness are now passed away. All is peace and light. Again He calls upon God as His Father. Not that He needed to make the prayer. For the Father could not leave His soul in hell. But He would shew us His power over Death, and teach us how to die.

Death is to us very fearful, as being the destruction of our present existence and a punishment for our sin. But He, our Almighty Lord, has borne this punishment, and has trodden the Valley of the Shadow of Death before us. In commending His own spirit, He commended the spirits of all His servants, to the Father's care. He shews us too that, though the body moulder in the grave, the soul is alive in its own place, and that in its Father's hands no torment can touch it.

He gives us a perfect example of resignation in death; shewing how we may make our willing death, as well as our obedient life, an acceptable sacrifice to the Father.

He shews us, again, what the end of life should be—not boasting, but humility and prayer. For what is it which we commend? Not a pure soul like His, but one soiled with many sins; one which, washed in His Blood, and for His sake forgiven, needs nevertheless much perfecting ere it bear with undazzled eyes the full glory of God's infinite purity.

'He that is joined unto Christ the Lord is one spirit,' writes St. Paul. 1 Cor. vi. 17. If we be thus joined to Christ, we need not fear the separation of soul and body. Our Father will keep our souls, and will raise up our bodies at the last day. Jesus has passed through the pains of death, and has made that which is a punishment justly deserved to be also an opportunity of service and sacrifice, of faith and love. He shews us that to die is to be with Him, which is far better, is the finishing of all earth's toils and sorrows, is the safe garnering in the Father's hand for them that die in the Lord.

• 'And He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.'

409. *The Descent into Hell.* 1 St. Peter iii. 18-20.

THE spirit of Jesus thus passed away, and left the lifeless body hanging upon the Cross. It is of this departure of His spirit that the Church teaches us when she bids us say,—‘He descended into hell.’

Of course by hell we do not mean the place of eternal suffering, or that place of torment in which the rich man opened his eyes after his life of selfish ease and indulgence. We mean that place where the souls of the righteous, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity. But what saith the Scripture?

We have first the Lord’s own words, which help to guide us to the meaning of the Creed. He had promised to the penitent thief a place with Him this day in Paradise. He had commended His spirit to His Father’s hands. St. Peter takes up the words of David, Acts ii. 25-31; Ps. xvi. 11, as referring to Christ’s descent into hell; and in his first Epistle, ch. iii. 18, he speaks of Christ being quickened, or made alive, in the spirit, and preaching to the spirits in safe keeping. And this seems to agree with the prophecy of Zechariah, ch. ix. 11. By hell, then, we mean not the grave or the resting-place of the body, nor the place of torment, but the home of departed spirits who have not sinned away for ever their hope of a better resurrection. Jesus, having truly died, His body must needs be buried in the grave; and His soul must needs go down into the place where the departed wait for the great day.

We see Jesus, then, dying as all men die, body and soul separated; the dead flesh laid in the grave, the departed soul going to its own place; body

and soul separated indeed, yet both filled by His Divine Nature, and only waiting His will to come together again, that He may live for evermore, in the perfect manhood of the Christ of God.

And as the Life of Jesus was ministry among the living, so was His Death ministry among the departed. It was as a conqueror that His soul entered the prison-house. He was free among the dead, mighty and glorious. He came, long expected, to tell the listening Saints, the once disobedient but not finally impenitent children of the older covenants, that the battle was fought, the victory won, the ransom paid, the atonement offered and accepted; that He was among them for a time, seemingly a captive, really, as Samson, soon to depart, breaking and carrying away the gates of the grave for ever. Judges xvi. 3.

Think of the souls of the waiting saints, longing through so many ages for the fulfilment of the promise of Messiah; longing for the assurance that the work of salvation was at last accomplished, that Death was swallowed up in victory! Think of their joy at seeing Him and hearing Him! Think what this is to us, too, that His Presence has shed light upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of Death; that we know, as we pass each to our place among them that sleep in Him, that Death is but the waiting-room, and that His voice will ere long call His own to stand around Him in the very presence of His Father.

410. *The Miracles at Jesus' Death.* St. Matt. xxvii. 51-56.

THE birth of Jesus was little marked among men. His first home on earth was a stable; His first bed a manger. But the Star of the East and the

Angel Choir brought worshippers to adore the newborn King. His death is even less honoured by men than His birth. Shame and agony are here as well as poverty. Yet here too Heaven and Earth bear their witness to the great event. The three hours' darkness, the quaking earth, the rending rocks, alike spoke to the spectators of the awful import of this day's work. At the same time, in the Holy City, the great curtain of the Temple was suddenly torn from top to bottom by unseen force. The day had begun with torture and insult inflicted upon Jesus in every possible way. No sooner had the Cross been raised than His enemies renewed their cruel and cowardly mockery. Presently followed a change. One of the thieves repented and believed. Miraculous darkness terrified the malicious hearts, and silenced the blasphemous tongues. And what then must have been their awe when, at that last loud expiring cry, they felt the ground reel beneath their feet, and saw the Cross before them tremble, and heard the crash of the rending and falling rocks!

Day after day Chief Priests and Pharisees had come tempting Jesus, asking of Him a sign from Heaven. Will not these suffice them, these signs in the Heaven above and the Earth beneath? No; they will not be persuaded though one rose from the dead. Yet one there is, a heathen in religion, a Gentile in blood, a man of war by profession, rough and hard perhaps, but honest and unprejudiced, who is neither afraid nor ashamed to confess the impression made on his mind by these signs. He knew, only too well, what a public execution was; he had watched, often enough, no doubt, and impatiently, the tedious, though agonising, effect of this punishment upon the unhappy victims—the

slowly ebbing strength, the feeble moaning, the last struggle after so many hours of prolonged torture. Never had he seen death ensue from crucifixion within six hours; never had he heard the loud cry just before death; never had he seen a death marked as this had been by darkness and earthquake. It was impossible that this Jesus of Nazareth could have been guilty of the crimes laid to his charge! Struck with awe and wonder, and not alone in this feeling, he speaks out his thoughts—yet rather to himself as an exclamation than to the bystanders—‘Certainly this was a righteous man! Truly this man was, as he claimed to be, Son of God!’

Many there were besides whose hearts misgave them, many who had been that morning among the fiercest and the loudest in their cries of ‘Crucify Him.’ But whether He were a righteous man or a guilty, Son of God or blasphemer, they could not undo their work. It is finished. Remembering that they had taken the burden of His blood upon their souls, they can only beat their breasts in grief and horror, and hasten from the fearful place.

411. *The Veil of the Temple.* St. Mark xv. 38;
Heb. x. 19-23.

FEARFUL as were these signs at the place of death, one of even greater and more awful import was shewn within the city. At the ninth hour, being the hour of prayer, the Temple was thronged with worshippers, especially numerous by reason of the Passover Feast. The Priest was ministering at the Altar of Burnt-offering, the smoke was rising from the lamb newly offered in the evening sacrifice. Before the inner Sanctuary, the Holy of

Holies, hung the thick woollen curtain of the Veil. Suddenly Priests and people see this Veil torn from top to bottom by unseen power, and the way into the Holiest Place, where the great Jehovah shewed His Presence upon the Mercy-seat in a visible glory, laid open to every eye and every foot. What had brought this to pass? What could it signify?

That part of the Temple, which was called the Holy Place, or Court of the Priests, signified the Church upon earth. The innermost Sanctuary, which stood beyond, called the Holy of Holies, or the Holiest of all, was a figure of Heaven. Between these hung the Veil, bright with many colours and the forms of the Cherubim wrought in embroidery and gold. This Veil taught the worshippers that the way into the Holiest was not yet made manifest. Heb. ix. 8. No one but the High Priest, and he once only in the year, on the great Day of Atonement, after special sacrifice and purification, and carrying with Him the Blood of the Covenant, dared to pass within. The breaking of this law was death. This rending of the Veil, therefore, by a miracle, must mean that the barrier was removed, that entrance into the Presence of God was henceforth always open to all men.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews these things are fully explained. The Veil itself was a figure of Christ's Human Nature; and when the Veil between God and man, that is to say, His Flesh, was rent on the Cross by death, then the hindrance placed between God and man was removed, and the new and living way was consecrated for us, that He, our great High Priest, might first go into the very Presence of God for us, bearing the Blood of the Covenant, the Atonement for our sins, and then

that we might have boldness to enter in also by His Blood, through this new and living way. The rending of the Veil was to teach that which the Death of Christ wrought, that the way to the Mercy-seat was henceforth always open.

And can we doubt but that many understood the sign? Soon a great company of the Priests were obedient to the faith. For they saw, through the Apostles' teaching, that the better Covenant had come, and the better Priesthood; and they learned to trust for salvation to Him, who in His own Person seems to have gathered up every type, so that He should be Sacrifice and Priest; who was in His Flesh the Veil and the Way between man and God, being Himself both God and man, our one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus.

412. *The Return to Jerusalem.* St. Luke xxiii.
48, 49.

MANY were gathered together to that sight—the death of the Son of God. Jesus of Nazareth was too well known for His trial and condemnation to pass unnoticed. The events of the morning, the crowd, and the shouting, and the almost riot before Pilate's Judgment Hall, the processions to and fro through the city, and thence, at last, to Calvary, naturally attracted a great multitude. Besides those who shared actively in the condemnation and execution, and those who had gone as interested or curious spectators, several of the Lord's dearest friends stood beholding, some by the Cross, others afar off. We may say, then, that those who saw the death of Jesus were of three classes, according as they were drawn to Calvary by hatred, or curiosity, or love.

Now the Church's yearly call to us at Passion-tide is, 'Behold the man!' And as we follow the Scripture readings in Holy Week, we go forth in spirit to that sight, beholding the things that are done. We have had many Good Fridays. With what feelings did we, last Holy Week, behold the sufferings and death of Jesus? In what mind did we return? In which class ought we to be placed when the next Good Friday comes?

Shall we stand beneath the Cross with the pure Mother of Jesus, with the loving John, with the penitent Mary Magdalene? Conscience tells us that we are neither pure enough, nor loving enough, nor penitent enough to stand with these. Well, shall we stand with the Roman executioners and Jewish Priests and Elders? God forbid! Not with them, certainly. Probably we should find among that mixed multitude some like ourselves, some who had been blessed by the word and touch of Jesus, and who had gone forth to Calvary hardly knowing why. And as they looked they began to understand a little, to grieve for Him, to fear for themselves. They remembered, perhaps, what John the Baptist had spoken of Him as the Lamb of God. And their hearts were touched; not merely with fear and horror at the darkness and the earthquake, but with a loving grief and shame mingled with faith and hope. Doubtless many who smote their breasts found healing for their souls, as they looked at the Son of Man lifted up upon the Cross. We would be content to be with these. We dare not claim a higher place.

But there were many who had beheld, and only hardened their hearts still more, the Jewish Rulers for example. What a spirit was theirs! To have known the Scriptures, and the types and prophecies

from their childhood, to have seen the Lamb of God sacrificed upon the Cross and not to have found healing for their souls—was not this an awful blindness and perversity? Yet so may we, with all our Christian knowledge, with all our keeping of the mournful Passiontide, see Jesus crucified, and yet, for want of faith and love, return to the world only more than ever blinded in conscience and hardened in heart.

413. *The Side of Jesus is pierced.* St. John
xix. 31-37.

THEY who had most to do with the death of Jesus were the least affected by that great sight. The Jewish Rulers, satisfied that He is dead, display their accustomed anxiety for the outward observance of their law. Occasionally the body of a criminal would, after stoning, be hung upon a tree, as a terror to evil-doers, but the Divine command strictly enjoined its removal before nightfall. Deut. xxi. 23. This was one, and a sufficient, reason for their desire. Another was, that that day was the Preparation, that is, Friday, the day before the Sabbath; and the coming Sabbath, as being within the week of the Passover, was a great Sabbath. Those three crosses, with the tortured and dying, or dead, bodies, standing throughout the feast in full view of the city, would cast a baleful gloom over their religious rejoicings. Besides, they might well fear, if they had observed the feelings of the dispersing crowd, that some of the people, beholding that sight on the morrow, might be struck with remorse and pity, and so the death of Jesus might after all win more disciples than His life. A message is therefore sent to Pilate asking that death may be

hastened by the breaking of their legs, so as to allow the bodies to be removed before sunset. The religious zeal which prepares this further dishonour for the body of Jesus, does but work out the purposes of Divine wisdom. Ignorantly and unintentionally they are fulfilling prophecy after prophecy. Their impatience to get the bodies buried before sunset served to place the death of Jesus beyond question. Ready as they were with their falsehoods, they would not have scrupled to say—had there been room for doubt—that Jesus had never really died; that His disciples had received a yet living body, and restored Him by their diligent care. The soldiers therefore came—once again it is ‘therefore’ with St. John—and, with a club, broke the legs of the thieves. On coming to Jesus they find that He is already dead. No need, therefore, to break His legs. Thus the Scripture which gave command concerning the lamb of the Passover that not a bone of it should be broken, is fulfilled in Him, the true Lamb of God, Christ our Passover. *Exod. xii. 46.* To make assurance doubly sure, one of the soldiers thrust his spear into the lifeless body, fulfilling another Scripture, *Zech. xii. 10*, and a torrent of blood and water gushed forth. St. John alone of the twelve was there to see this. But he is certain of the fact, and if at the time he did not think of its deep meaning, he knew it when he wrote. In this double stream from the wounded side of Jesus he recognises the two Sacraments, the water of Baptism, the Blood of the Holy Communion.

So the Jews fulfil for the penitent thief his Lord's gracious promise: ‘This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.’ So, in hastening the removal of the Sacred Body of Jesus from the Cross, they provide that it shall lie in the grave three days, and that it

shall be, as He had foretold, the third day when He rises from the dead.

414. *The Blood and the Water.* 1 St. John v. 6-8.

THE Blood and Water flowing from the wounded side of Jesus find mention again in St. John's Epistle. Can we wonder at it? For how many thoughts of sacramental blessing are suggested by them! And this we especially remark in St. John's writings, that he bears record so continually and distinctly of the sacramental teaching and actions of Jesus. He saw far more than the blood and water which might naturally flow from such a wound. He speaks in his Epistle of Jesus Christ coming by Water and Blood. He adds, too, with singular exactness, not by Water only, but by Water and Blood. Let us see how these things are.

How did Christ, how does Christ, come by Water?

He came, before His Incarnation, in type and figure by all the purifications of His ancient Church. In the water from the rock His people drank of Him in the wilderness. 1 Cor. x. 4. He came by Water in His Baptism, being thereby appointed by the Holy Spirit to His ministry among men, sanctifying water to the mystical washing away of sin. He came by Water thus after His death. He comes by Water to us in our Baptism, as He said, 'Except a man be born of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.'

But not by Water only. By Blood also. And how did Christ, how does Christ, come by Blood?

He came, before His Incarnation, in type and figure by all the Sacrifices of His ancient Church. He came by Blood in His Circumcision, in His

Agony and Bloody Sweat, and Passion and Cross. He came by Blood thus after His death. He comes by Blood to us in the Holy Communion, as He said, 'Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you.'

Thus it is He comes to us ; by Water, washing away our sins ; by Blood, giving His life a ransom for us, then by it nourishing us, that we drinking thereof may renew our strength. Thus it is that our Second Adam, sleeping the sleep of death, gives life to His Bride the Church, that she may be the Mother of all living, that her children may be regenerate by Water and the Holy Ghost, may be fed and sustained by His most precious Body and Blood.

Oh, strange that Christian people should so many of them serve their Lord with a half faith ! Some will, for custom's sake, or as an outward sign of membership with His Church, bring their children to Baptism, and themselves go to Communion. But they look upon the Sacraments only as outward forms, they say ; that is, they deny what St. John affirms, that there are three that bear record on earth, the Water, and the Blood, and the Spirit with them, these three agreeing in one. Or they lay great stress on Baptism, and believe all that the Church teaches from her Lord's words, and yet hold back from Communion. Is not this as much as to say that Christ comes by the Water only, and that they need not look to Him to come by the Blood ? What can this double stream of Water and Blood mean for us ? Why should St. John bear witness of it in his Epistle as well as in his Gospel, if it were not that we might see in it the proclamation of sacramental grace and blessing, the assurance that the Font of Holy Baptism and in the Cup of Holy

Communion there is given us a part in the Death of Christ to the cleansing, and to the strengthening and refreshing, of our soul.

415. *The Burial of Jesus.* St. Mark xv. 42-47.

WHAT further outrage His enemies might have inflicted on the Body of Jesus we know not, had it not been for the loving courage of two members of the Council, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, the birthplace of Samuel, a village but a few miles from Jerusalem. Joseph was a good and just man in spite of his riches, but hitherto, and perhaps by reason of his riches, ashamed to confess the faith which he cherished in his heart. Nicodemus was, as we have seen, St. John iii. 1 ; vii. 50-53, of the same high rank and position, the same in faith and in caution. Possibly they had not yet thoroughly made up their minds about Jesus ; they had not satisfied themselves that He was more than a prophet. At any rate they were not inclined to expose themselves to being cast out of the synagogue for His sake. It is scarcely necessary to say that they had no share in the condemnation of Jesus. Still they do not appear to have made any efforts to save Him ; it may be they felt it to be a hopeless and a dangerous task. Now, however, by His death, their minds are made up. Joseph, therefore, taking courage, applies to Pilate for permission to remove the body. Pilate cannot believe that Jesus is really dead until he has received the Centurion's assurance that it is so. Then he gladly gives permission. For so he would, in some small degree, shew his continued dissatisfaction with the doings of that cruel day.

Nicodemus is now united with Joseph in this pious work. He has brought, at no small expense,

the sweet spices for enwrapping the body, myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight; Joseph has purchased the fair linen cloth for the winding-sheet. Then they hasten to Calvary. A few watchers are yet standing by the Cross, the Galilæan women and John. The Church believes that the Blessed Mother herself has also returned thither. They would wonder what these strangers may intend. The purpose is soon explained. The ladders are raised, the nails drawn out, the poor, torn, bruised body is reverently and tenderly lifted down, and laid at His Mother's feet. All the last offices are paid which love can pay to the dead; the linen cloth is wrapped around the body, the napkin round the head.

Close by lay the garden, in the rocky shelving ground of which Joseph had hewn out a sepulchre for himself. As yet no corpse had been buried there. Let Jesus be the first. For no time can be lost in seeking another grave, even if Joseph wished it. Thus another prophecy is fulfilled: 'He made His death with the wicked, but was with the rich man in His tomb. Isa. liii. 9. The women follow the bearers. Did they think of the day when in Galilee He had stopped the funeral procession to bid the mother weep not, and to give life to the dead, or when He called Lazarus out of the tomb? And now He Himself was dead, He who had claimed to be the Resurrection and the Life! They see His body laid in its place. The great stone is rolled back to close the entrance of the sepulchre. Nothing now remains to the mourners but to sit for awhile in weeping watchfulness, and then to return and make their preparation for paying other honours to the body of their dear Lord, so soon as the Sabbath shall be past.

416. *Christian Burial.* St. Luke xxiii. 52-56.

THE Burial of the Dead has ever been classed by the Church among the works of Mercy. Yet there is more than mercy in it; there is affection and honour; there is faith and hope.

The affection and honour we understand at once. The body of our departed friend has been the habitation of his mind and soul; the instrument by which he has made known his thoughts to us and received ours in return. Those eyes have looked love into our eyes; those lips have spoken kind words; those hands have ministered to our necessities, and have pressed our hands in friendly grasp. Indeed it is hard not to speak of the dead as if *that* were our friend himself which we lay in the coffin and carry to the tomb. The last honour we can pay is to lay the corpse reverently in the earth which has been made holy ground by the blessing of the Bishop.

But reverence and honour men have in all ages paid to their dead, even when they believed that the soul was quenched for ever in the death of the body. Our belief raises us higher than this. Our faith looks backward and forward too. Looking backward, it remembers that the body of the departed Christian was the Temple of the Holy Ghost; that its members were the members of Christ; that it was offered a living sacrifice to the Father, 1 Cor. vi. 15; Rom. xii. 1; that God has employed that body with its limbs and senses as an instrument of righteousness unto holiness; that His sanctifying Spirit has guided it with all godly motions; that the Son of God has given it to receive His own Body and Blood for spiritual Food and Sustenance. What the Eternal God hath thus cleansed,

and fed, and inspired, and accepted as a sacrifice to Himself, is not to be treated as the carcase of the beast that perishes. We honour the body after the soul has fled, because God has so highly honoured it in the past.

Looking forward, our faith sees the Resurrection of the Body and the Life of the world to come. That which we lay in the grave will moulder away, we know, until we cannot distinguish it from the common dust. But we know also that our dead men shall live; that the Earth shall cast out her dead; that the Voice of the Son of Man shall be heard in that Day, and they that hear shall live. Isa. xxvi. 19; St. John v. 25.

It was in faith of a day which should bring life to the dead that Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph prepared their burying-places and gave commandment concerning their bones; that devout men carried Stephen to his burial; that Job and David and Paul spoke of seeing the Redeemer in their restored flesh, of waking up after His likeness; their body of humiliation changed and fashioned into the likeness of His Body of Glory.

Therefore we commit the body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, not sorrowing as those that are without hope, but in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal Life through our Lord Jesus Christ; seeing by faith that restoration which was manifested to Ezekiel in his wondrous vision. Ezek. xxxvii. 1-10.

Therefore we would, as the early Christians, carry our dead to their rest lovingly, reverently, hopefully—aye, thankfully and joyously—knowing that He who keeps the spirit will raise up the body; that according to the blessed words of Communion, the
 and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ will pre-

serve our bodies as well as our souls unto everlasting Life.

These are thoughts for ourselves who live as well as for our friends who sleep. If the Christian's body be so holy a thing, shall we not take heed to ourselves always, lest by fleshly sin we defile this Temple of the Holy Ghost, these members of Christ, and so God in His anger destroy us?

417. *The Soldiers keeping Watch.* St. Matt. xxvii.
62-66.

THE last rays of the setting sun fell upon the party engaged in this work of love. Then the evening darkened over them, and the Sabbath was begun. On the Sabbath of the first Creation God rested from all His work; on the Sabbath, therefore, in the New Creation the Lord rested from the work which He had finished in His death.

Again we observe the inconsistency of the Jewish rulers. They, so bitterly scrupulous about the keeping of the Sabbath, are gathered together before Pilate with a new request. Joseph of Arimathæa has, by his permission, given honourable burial to the Body of Jesus. Deceitful themselves, and therefore suspicious, they perceive a new peril. They report to Pilate words which Jesus had spoken, words which surely made him more afraid than ever. We remember that that deceiver—so they call Jesus—said while He was yet alive—‘After three days I will rise again.’ How had they heard this saying of His so as to remember it? Had He ever said so in their hearing? Or had Judas told them? Or had the conversations of the disciples been reported to them by their spies? And how was it that they in their unbelief and malice understood what the dis-

ciples, with all their faith and love, never yet understood? Did they at last comprehend what He meant in saying that He would raise again this Temple in three days; that, like Jonas, He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth? St. John ii. 18-22; St. Matt. xii. 38-40. They require that precautions be immediately taken lest His disciples steal the body from the sepulchre, and spread abroad the report that He is risen from the dead.

Not one of the Evangelists attempts to tell us how this report of Jesus' words affected Pilate's mind. St. Matthew alone relates this interview and the Governor's curt answer: 'They have men at their disposal, and may take what measures they please.' Upon this they act immediately. The stone which covered the entrance to the sepulchre is made fast to the solid rock by a lump of clay, on which their seal is impressed, so that any attempt to remove the stone would be betrayed by the breaking of the impression. And as a further precaution a guard is set to keep watch till the third day shall have passed.

As nearly six hundred years before, the enemies of one of God's holiest servants had sealed the stone, leaving the Saint as good as dead in the den of lions, Dan. vi. 17, so do they leave Jesus as good as dead, the prey, they think, of that roaring Lion who devoureth souls. But now, as then, the mouth of the lion is stopped. Ps. xci. 13. While the persecutor watches in his malice, the persecuted slumbers unharmed; for God maketh him to dwell safely. And with the morning he that was cast away, imprisoned, given over unto death, comes forth alive.

Daniel the type, Jesus the antitype. And as with the enemies of Daniel, even so shall it

be with the enemies of the Lord. They shall fall into their own mischief, and into the pit of destruction which they laid for others. Ps. vii. 15, 16.

418. *The Sabbath Day.* St. Luke xxiii. 56.

THE Sabbath Day, the Day of Rest, had come, and what had that week brought to the disciples of Jesus? But six days ago the multitude was welcoming their Master as Son of David and King of Israel. Now those hopes are covered by the stone of the sepulchre. Jesus is dead, dead upon the Cross, buried by strangers, and His disciples were not even there to help.

The home of John would probably be the centre where all met. Zebedee is not mentioned. Perhaps he was not alive now, or had not come up to the Feast. But Salome is in Jerusalem; her house would be the home of her sons James and John, and therefore the home of the Blessed Virgin Mother. Mary, the wife of Cleophas, as the sister or cousin of the Lord's Mother, would be almost one of that household; there, too, Mary of Magdala would be a welcome guest; there John would have brought Peter, weeping, and not be comforted except by the pitying love of his brother disciple. From this house the three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, went forth with their burden of sweet spices on the morning of Easter day; and hither Mary Magdalene returned in her amazement and fear to tell Peter and John that strangers have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre.

Oh, what a sad day was that Sabbath to them! For Him they could believe that all was well. The long years of waiting, the weary life of labour, the

unrequited months of ministry and of teaching, the bitter hours of pain, all were over now for Him. He should suffer no more. His part was eternally with His Father. But for themselves—what bitterness of spirit! The disappointment of their hopes was the least of their sorrows. It was their conduct towards Him which grieved them most, their faithlessness and cowardice and ingratitude. All had joined in the boast that they would not deny Him in anywise. St. Mark xiv. 31. Yet one only of all the Twelve, the disciple whom He loved, had dared be near Him through all. He was gone. Never could they tell Him now how bitterly they repented of their unfaithfulness; never should Peter tell Him of the bitter tears which that last look had wrung from his heart.

Do we not sometimes think thus of our behaviour to the loved ones we have lost? We might have done so much for them—we think of it all now—but we did not do it; and they are gone! Our conscience pricks us, and we fret about it. And sometimes we waste our time in these vain regrets. That is of no use. To do what they would have us do, what they would themselves be doing if they were with us, this is the true sorrow, the true affection for the departed.

That Sabbath Day brought no rest to their sad hearts. Their grief was the heavier because in it they could do nothing. Even if they might have watched by the tomb the heathen soldiers were there. The Sabbath must be kept in its silence and its rest. At last, with the sunset hour, this constraint is removed; they may continue their preparations, and set the ointment and the spices in readiness for the renewal of their loving and honouring care as soon as morning shall break.

Sad hearts and weeping eyes, ye know not that the Bright and Morning Star has risen upon the darkness of the grave, that the Sun of Righteousness is shining there with healing in His wings; and that very early, even before the rising of your earthly sun, the Lord your God shall make your darkness to be Light!

PART XVI.

THE RISEN LIFE.

419. *The Resurrection of Jesus.* St. Mark xvi. 1, 2.

‘**A**ND when the Sabbath was past’—so begins the story of the Resurrection of Jesus. Truly the Sabbath was past, the day of rest to Him that was dead, the day of sorrow to those who loved Him, the day of religious rest and worship to those who lived under the old Covenant. A new day has come. To-day He that was dead liveth; to-day they that mourned are to rejoice; to-day they that kept Sabbath are to find it fulfilled to them for ever in this new day of greater deliverance, of better worship, of brighter hope. The Sabbath was a shadow only of good things to come, Col. ii. 16; to-day the substance of those good things is given. The Sabbath is past. The Lord’s Day has come. ‘This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.’ Ps. cxviii. 24.

Jesus is risen. But of that rising not one word is told us. We are taken by the holy Evangelists to the empty tomb; we see Him again, we hear His voice; but when He rose, and how, is not related. The Lord is risen. Yet we may think of the Spirit of Jesus passing from among the spirits in the rest and joy of the Paradise of God, amid their songs of

praise and adoration ; attended by them to the very gates ; then re-entering His Sacred Body, and instilling it with life, healing its wounds, taking to it a beauty and majesty and power with which He had not hitherto clothed it, save in that brief moment of His Transfiguration. The grave-clothes are laid aside for ever. He needed not, as Lazarus, that some one should loose Him and let Him go. Then He comes forth. The Lord is risen.

He had forewarned His disciples that the third day He would rise again. According to the Jewish reckoning, the hours before sunset on the Friday would count for the first day ; the second would be ended with the sunset of the Sabbath ; with that evening the third day had begun. One whole day, with portions however small of the yesterday and the morrow, counted with the Jews as three days.

This we know, that the Resurrection of Jesus was very early in the morning, before light. His birth into the world is supposed to have been very early ; inasmuch as the Angels appearing to the Shepherds through the darkness tell them that Christ is born this day. St. Luke ii. 11. So is His second birth from the grave. As at the first Creation, before the sun was placed in the heaven, God said, 'Let there be light, and there was light ;' so now, in the regeneration of the world, before the rising of the sun, the True Light of the world had risen, and there is Light. Like Samson who lay till midnight, and then arose and carried away with him the doors of the gate of the city, bar and all, Judg. xvi. 3, the greater than Samson lay till midnight, and then arose and broke the gates of the Grave for ever. Yet, so the Church believes, all in deepest silence. Not for Him the removal of the stone ; not at His

glorious appearing the terror of the Roman guards ; not for His passing the earthquake. All this was at the coming of the Angel, that men might see the empty sepulchre and know that the Lord is risen. Returning in His triumph with all the power of God, He passed through the sealed sepulchral stone, as the sunbeam passes through the glass.

420. *The Lord's Day.* Rev. i. 10.

A NEW day was dawning on the world, the Lord's Day. Now the true Sun had risen, bringing life and immortality to light. Now the great Creator was making all things new. Henceforth the first day of the week is the holy Day of the Church of Christ, the Lord's Day. From the day of Jesus' rising we count the weeks of the Church.

At the Creation God rested the seventh day, and blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it. At the bringing His people out of Egypt, He renewed His commandment that this day should be holy unto the Lord. By His prophets He insisted on the due observance of that day. Isa. lviii. 13, 14. For four thousand years that seventh day was the day of the Lord. Then came the glorious reality of which the Sabbath was but the shadow. For then came the new creation, in the Resurrection of Christ, the first-fruits, the first-begotten from the dead, bringing in a day of rest, yet of more than rest, of Light, and Joy, and Glory. After His Resurrection we hear no more of the Sabbath Day, except as a Jewish ordinance. It is the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, which shines henceforth as the weekly rest and refreshment, the weekly assurance of Christ's everlasting presence with His Church.

On this day Christ rose from the dead, and shewed Himself to His disciples. The week runs its course; again they are assembled, again He appears among them. Seven weeks pass; their Lord has gone to the Father, and the disciples are assembled together on the first day of the week, and the Holy Ghost is poured out on the Church. This was immediately made her day of worship, especially of the Breaking of Bread, that is, of the Holy Eucharist. No direct command is recorded; the Church understood that such was the mind of her Lord. And it was on the Lord's Day that the banished Apostle in Patmos, being in the Spirit, received the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the first visions of the things which should be hereafter.

We, of course, follow the teaching and the practice of the early Christians. We keep the Lord's Day holy. It is to us the commemoration of the Resurrection of Jesus, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost, an Easter Day and a Whitsun Day in every week, as every Friday is in every week the commemoration of the Lord's Death. The Jewish Sabbath was a day of gloom. The Christian Lord's Day is a day of joy and gladness. Like the Jewish Sabbath, in so far as it is a day for the rest of men and the worship of God. But oh, how far more to us! A day of going up to the House of the Lord, a day of pleading the great Sacrifice on His Altar, a day of feasting at His Table, a day of Communion with the Lord and with all His Saints. This, and nothing less than this, is the true worship of God, is true Christian Communion, is true keeping the Lord's Day holy. This day, therefore, we will be with Jesus, keeping it holy, as His day; this day we will rejoice and be glad, but with a free and generous joy; waiting for the rest that remaineth

for the people of God ; waiting for that which shall be indeed the Lord's Day, when the Light of His Countenance shall rise upon the whole earth.

421. *The Angel at the Sepulchre.* St. Matt. xxviii. 1-4 ; St. Mark xvi. 1-4.

BEFORE the dawn, very early in the morning before the rising of the sun, Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Salome have left their home to carry to the sepulchre of Jesus the spices which they had purchased on the previous evening. In these they intend to wrap the body of the Lord they loved, that it may the longer resist the corruption of death. As they are on their road a difficulty strikes them, a very serious one—How shall they roll away the stone which closes the tomb ? It was far too heavy for their feeble powers.

Difficulties beset us. We must expect it to be so in all our works of love. And before the difficulties many of the servants of Jesus lose heart and give up. 'Who shall roll us away the stone ?' is the question we often ask. And then in our cowardice and idleness, we make answer to ourselves,—'There is no one to roll it away ; we are attempting impossible things ; lie down to sleep again.' Prov. xxvi. 13. But true love says, 'I will go as far as I can, I will do what I can, and trust to Him to make our way clear before us.' And as we go on, faint yet pursuing, trusting to Him to help us, lo ! the stone is already rolled away, and an Angel from Heaven meets us with tidings of great joy.

How had this stone been rolled away ?

Behold, there had been a great earthquake ; even

as it was of old, when God went before His people; the effect of the Lord's presence, not the means whereby the way from the tomb was opened to Him. And the angel of the Lord came down from Heaven, ministering to Him in this beginning of His glory as he had ministered to Him exhausted with His long fast and with His agony in the garden. St. Matt. iv. 11; St. Luke xxii. 43. Then it was that the Roman soldiers, brave as lions against the stoutest of earthly foes, fell stricken with terror. Against the disciples of Jesus they would have defended the tomb to the death. But how shall they endure the brightness of this Heavenly Messenger? Ah, what would it have been had Jesus, when a prisoner before the High Priest, summoned the twelve legions of Angels to His aid? Vain is it for man to strive against God!

Does not this prepare us for the glory and the awfulness of that Day, when the earth shall hear the voice of the Archangel and the Trump of God, when the Lord shall shake not the earth only but also Heaven, Heb. xii. 26; when the stone shall be rolled away from every grave, and every man shall rise to stand before the Angels' Lord? Not one Angel then, but ten thousands of Angels shall minister unto Him. The terrors of Sinai will be as nothing to that Day. The Glory of Jesus in His Resurrection shall be as nothing compared with the Glory of Jesus in His return to Judgment.

The glory before which the soldiers of earth became as dead men, shines with softer radiance on those that seek Jesus. It is for them that the Angel has rolled away the stone; sitting upon it, as though its work is done for ever; waiting to pacify their fears, and to assure them that the Lord is risen, by shewing them the empty tomb.

422. *The Angel and the Women.* St. Mark xvi. 4-8; St. Luke xxiv. 1-11.

AS the three women approach the sepulchre, they observe—who shall say with what feelings?—that the great stone has been rolled away. Their first thoughts would be of fear and suspicion. Was this some further malice of the Jews? Were His enemies so exasperated at the pious care of Joseph and Nicodemus that they must violate the tomb, and drag away the body of Jesus that it may lie unburied among the rotting corpses in the valley of Gehenna?

The different accounts of this first visit to the tomb are hard to reconcile. They are best explained by supposing that Mary Magdalene, on seeing the stone thus rolled away, immediately ran back for help, leaving the other Mary and Salome to go on by themselves. St. John writes as first summoned by Mary Magdalene in her fear and grief, and then as being himself an eye-witness of the empty tomb and the folded grave-clothes. He, therefore, omits—what had been told by the other Evangelists—the meeting of Mary and Salome with the Angel. But what more natural than that one—and that one Mary Magdalene, the woman to whom so much had been forgiven, and who therefore loved much—should run back to tell Simon Peter, while her friends hastened on to ascertain the extent of the disaster? On reaching the Sepulchre they find the Angel sitting at the entrance, and as they draw back terrified, he bids them not to fear. Yet with the good news which he gives, a gentle rebuke is conveyed. They are seeking Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified. Ought they not to have
own better than to come here, seeking the living

among the dead? Did they not remember His words? He is risen, as He said. Since their faith, or their memory, has been so weak, let them see for themselves. This is the place where they laid Him—empty! Now, let them go and tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is risen, and that they shall see Him in Galilee.

It is St. Mark who adds, ‘and Peter;’ writing from that Apostle’s lips. The Lord before His rising had sent a message of absolution to the fallen and penitent Apostle. He has not spoken with Peter since the three denials, but He has known throughout the bitter sorrow, the abundant tears, the yearning for the forgiveness which Peter never expected to hear spoken to him on earth. Oh, blessed reward committed to the women who seek Jesus thus early, that they should bear their Lord’s message to His sorrowing servant!

To Peter chiefly; but to the rest with Peter. And the women amazed, and fearful still in the midst of their joy, hasten from that awful, blessed place; not speaking of what they have seen till they should find those for whom the message is intended, that all might rejoice together.

423. *The risen Saints in the Holy City.* St. Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

MANY were the miracles which the Lord Jesus did in His life of ministry; but the crown of all was the raising of Himself. As He laid down His life, so He took it again, of Himself. And in His death and rising again He gave proof of His Divine power, making the lifeless things of Earth and Heaven to bear their witness to the world. As He committed His spirit to His Father’s hands, the

Veil of the Temple was rent in twain—signifying that the way into the Presence of God was now open to all; and the earth did quake and the rocks rent—signifying that the prison-house of Death was burst, and that Life had overcome Death. It was no mere shaking of the earth, no mere opening of yawning chasms for the purpose of terrifying the spectators. The graves were opened. And many bodies of the Saints which had been laid to sleep arose, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many.

There is scarcely any circumstance in the whole Bible history more mysterious than this. St. Matthew mentions the fact. He gives no particulars and no explanation. The other Evangelists do not even refer to it. Yet consider what it would be to us, and therefore what it must have been to the men of Jerusalem, to see some whom they had known in the flesh, and others who had been laid to rest years ago, standing before them in the flesh! Would they not shrink and tremble more at this than at any other sign or wonder which could have been shewn them? And for what purpose was this appearance? Were any words spoken, any tokens shewn, by which faith might be confirmed, faintness sustained, unbelief rebuked, and ungodliness converted? Were any sent as to the rich man's brethren, warning them lest they also should go into that place of torment? We know not, and it is to no purpose that we guess.

The opening of the graves appears to have taken place at the moment of the Lord's death. The rising of the bodies of the Saints would certainly not be before He had risen. For He was the first-fruits, the first-begotten from the dead. They would arise with Him, and their open shewing of them-

selves in the Holy City would give a pledge and earnest of the general resurrection. They would appear among their brethren who were in the flesh like the first soft leaves of earliest spring, the first balmy breezes, which tell the frozen and barren earth that the power of winter is broken. These leaves may be blighted by the freezing winds of another day. But they have told their tale. Life is being renewed to the earth. A little longer, and we shall see it with our eyes.

So with the bodies of the Saints. And what of them afterwards? Did they, like Lazarus and the others, return again to their tombs? Or did they with Jesus pass with body and soul from earth, to be with Enoch and Elijah, those whose bodies had never tasted death, into the Holy City which is above? Rev. xxi. 2. We know not. Enough that He knows who is the Resurrection and the Life to us as well as to them.

While these mighty and comforting proofs are being given to those who loved the Lord, the soldiers are telling the chief priests of the earthquake and the Angel and the stone rolled away. There is no explaining these facts; they must be met with a direct denial. And so—oh, wonderful self-deceit and resistance to the Holy Spirit!—they give out the absurd story that Roman soldiers slept at their post, and that the timid disciples of Jesus had contrived to steal away the body! Who would believe this lie, but those who were determined never to believe the truth? How truly did He speak who, knowing what was in man, declared that neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead!

424. *Peter and John at the Sepulchre.* St. John
xx. 1-10.

ST. John's account of this first visit to the tomb is concerned with Mary Magdalene only. No doubt he heard the whole story from her lips that very Easter Day. It begins with her horror and fear when she perceived that the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre. At once she hurries back to tell Peter and that other disciple—that is, John; and in breathless excitement she speaks of that which she fears as if it were an ascertained fact—‘They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him.’ Horror-stricken at the profanation, the two disciples do not wait to question her, but run with all their speed to the tomb; the younger outstripping the elder. But while John's youthful strength, corresponding with his ardent love, has carried him thus forward, in his great reverence he contents himself with looking within; he does not enter. Peter is close behind, and his eager impetuosity will brook no uncertainty. He must know all—the worst, if there be a worst. At once he enters. The body of Jesus is not to be seen! But he can perceive no sign of haste or violence. The winding-sheet lies by itself; the napkin that was about the head lies also, folded, in its own place. The tomb is as a bed which the sleeper has, on quitting, left in decent and comely order. John now follows his companion into the sepulchre. And, as he gazes and reflects, his Lord's sayings flash across his mind. He has seen, and believed. He is satisfied that Mary Magdalene is distressing herself needlessly. Jesus is risen! It is all clear to him now. But up to this moment he had been

as much in the dark as the rest, as much in the dark as Peter still was, in spite of those many prophecies and signs.

Here surely we see the power of love ! Who first believed that Jesus was risen ? It was the disciple whom Jesus loved—and that sounds to us exactly the same as the disciple who loved Jesus. For the love of Jesus kindles an answering love in the pure, unworldly heart. And Love is own brother to Faith as well as to Obedience. Love sees with eagle eye into the very depth of those mysteries which the Father in His wisdom has concealed from the wise and prudent. Wondering if indeed it were so, and amazed, he departed, not speaking of these things, but like the Blessed Mother of His Lord, keeping them and pondering them in his heart. As yet none of them knew the Scriptures, none of them understood what the Jewish Rulers had been quicker to understand, that Jesus had promised to rise the third day. For malice and cruelty are quick to suspect what they fear ; and love, especially mourning and fearful love, is slow to believe that which it desires. John now believes, at the sight of the empty sepulchre, and on the slight evidence given by the folded grave-clothes, lying thus. Nevertheless he is silent, lest he should be cherishing false hopes. Moreover, even if the Lord be risen, His gain is their loss. He may be by this time ascended as well as risen, and they may never see Him more in this world. This may be the fulfilment of His word—‘ I go to the Father, and ye see Me no more.’ The Church is comfortless ; the disciples are orphans. All that is left to them now is to tell what they have seen ; to leave others to build what they will upon it of hope or fear ; for themselves simply to wonder whether they shall again see their living Lord, and

if so, whether He will manifest Himself in the glory of His Kingdom.

425. *Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene.* St. John
xx. 11-16.

BUT Mary Magdalene stood without at the sepulchre weeping. Her companions, Mary the wife of Cleophas and Salome, had gone away; she infers, therefore, that they had no good news to tell. Peter and John have confirmed her fears that the body of Jesus is removed. Still she cannot tear herself away from the place where He was laid. She who had been the last at the tomb on the day of death will remain and keep her sad watch by the empty grave; some one will come by presently, who may be able to give her information. But meanwhile, may she not look once at the place where Jesus lay? for it is sanctified to her as holy ground for ever. She stoops to do so; and, oh, wondrous sight! the grave is a place of Angels. The Heavenly Messengers ask the cause of her tears. But she is too engrossed in her sorrow to be either affrighted or encouraged. It is neither man nor Angel that can comfort her now. 'Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee.' Ps. lxxiii. 25. It is Jesus that she seeks, Jesus that she must find. To the Angels she replies as simply and promptly as she would reply to a sister, claiming Him as all her own. 'They have taken away my Lord'—not 'the Lord' merely, but '*my* Lord!'—'and I know not where they have laid Him.' It is in this spirit that Christian people should seek their Saviour. Mistakes there may be in our knowledge of Him, in our way of seeking. For we have not all

of us knowledge. But we may all have love. And to seek Him in this spirit, because He is precious to us, 1 St. Peter ii. 7, is to find Him, and that soon. If we cannot find Him otherwise, our seeking souls shall receive light and guidance directly from Heaven.

A footstep behind her! Turning, she sees a strange face, and a strange voice repeats the question, 'Woman, why weepest thou?' The speaker must be, she imagines, the keeper of Joseph's garden. He will know how to account for this empty sepulchre. Perhaps Joseph, with all his kindness and reverence, is not above the weakness and pride of the rich. He may not have chosen to make his own new tomb more than a temporary resting-place for the body. What more likely than that this gardener has been ordered to remove it to another grave, more suitable to the lowly position of Jesus of Nazareth? He will surely be glad to be relieved of this task, and oh, how readily will she attend to it, if he will only shew her where the body has been laid!

'Jesus saith unto her, Mary!'

In one moment a new light bursts upon her! It is His voice! It is the Lord! As He had said to His servant Moses, 'I know thee by thy name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight,' Ex. xxxiii. 12, so her name, thus spoken by His voice, assured her that she had found grace in His sight, that He claimed her as His, and gave to her Himself. She turns again, but with what a different turning! 'Rabboni, Master!' is her cry; and she fain would kiss His feet. She, first of all, before the eleven, before the disciple whom Jesus loved, before His own dear Mother, she has seen her Lord.

426. *Touch Me not.* St. John xx. 17, 18.

IN her loving delight at hearing His voice, and seeing His face, Mary Magdalene would have embraced His feet; would have wept over them and kissed them as once of old in the house of the Pharisee. This the Lord—much to her surprise, no doubt—absolutely and at once forbids. Why?

Because she does not understand the great change which the Resurrection has made between the past and the future.

Now He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the Resurrection from the dead. Rom. i. 4. She must learn once for all that He is not with her, or with any of them, as He had hitherto been. In those old days, the days of His weakness and humiliation, He was among them as one that served. Then He gladly accepted the love and the gifts of the women who ministered to Him of their substance. He was brother and friend with them all. Even though they honoured Him as Teacher and Lord, they treated Him, for the most part, with less of awe and outward reverence than they would have paid to one of the Angels. So long, therefore, as she sought Him as the friend who had been vanquished by death, or as the friend who had been given back from the tomb, as another Lazarus restored to the tender care of loving sisters, so long she was ignorant of the power and glory of His Resurrection. To doubt and unbelief it was granted to handle the sacred body, to touch the wounds, that there might remain no doubt of the reality of His Resurrection. But from this moment they who would touch Him from the impulse of great love, as their earthly friend and benefactor, only a little greater than themselves, must wait till He has

ascended to His Father. Then He would have withdrawn Himself from the touch of the flesh ; then He would give Himself to the touch of the spirit.

The words forbid what she wishes. But, on the other hand, how much more do they open out before her and us ! Do they not promise that when He is ascended to the Father, Mary may touch Him, touch Him most really by faith and love ? And so, is not this a promise for all ages, and for us, that we may touch our ascended Lord ? In very deed it is. The Son of God, ascended up into Heaven, and sitting on the throne of His glory at the Father's right hand, is yet within reach of us, and may be touched by every one of us by the touch of faith.

But, again, how shall these things be ? By the lifting up of heart and mind, by contemplation and meditation, and sweet communion of affection. Yet not by these only. Surest and chiefest and closest of all is that sacramental touching of the Saviour's Body, whereby, discerning His presence by the spiritual discernment of faith, we reach out our hand and hold Him, ours in the receiving of that Holy Sacrament, ours in the very closest life-giving incorporation, if we feed on Him in our heart by faith with thanksgiving.

Mary Magdalene may not touch Him yet. Touch Him afterwards she did, when after His resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit in ordaining power on the Church, she knelt at His Altar in the Breaking of Bread.

Now she is sent to His brethren with His message, assuring them of His unchanging love ; for He calls them His brethren ; yet making the difference between Him and them : ' I ascend unto My Father, and your Father ; and to My God, and your God.'

He is not Son of God as they are, but in an infinitely higher, in a substantial relationship.

For He is God, of God. They must know this, and remember it.

427. *The Risen Lord's Love for Penitents.* St. Mark xvi. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 5; St. Luke xxiv. 34.

'FIRST to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils;'—thus it is that St. Mark begins his mention of the various appearances of the risen Jesus. He calls us to observe the greatness of the love and blessing which the Lord shewed to one whom the world would call utterly unworthy. And the next to whom the Lord shewed Himself seems to have been the disciple who had thrice denied Him. St. Mark, writing under St. Peter's instruction, passes this over, mentioning only the command given by the Angel to the women that they should go and tell His disciples and Peter. But this message of kindness and reconciliation was speedily followed by the lifting up of the Lord's face upon the penitent disciple. Some time in the day, most probably quite early in the morning, and in the garden, Jesus was seen of Peter. St. Luke xxiv. 34. It was therefore to two who had fallen most grievously, and who had—we must remember this—repented most thoroughly, that the Lord shewed Himself very early on the morning of His resurrection.

His most precious promises are addressed to the good and true of heart. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; the pure in heart shall see God. And yet, at this very special time, when we should have expected Him to reveal Himself chiefly, if not only, to the more perfect souls, He is

appearing, first to Mary Magdalene, and but a little while afterwards to Peter !

Surprising as this is, contrary to all our calculations, it is only of a piece with all His exceeding pity. It is as the great Shepherd of the sheep that the God of peace has brought Him again from the dead. Heb. xiii. 20. At once, therefore, He brings His peace to those who chiefly needed it ; at once He seeks and saves that which was lost without Him. These especially were weary and heavy laden. They wanted Him ; they wanted, and felt that they wanted, the pardon and remission of their sin assured to them in the presence, and from the lips, of the Great High Priest of God.

And so Easter, and the contemplation of the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, brings encouragement to the penitent no less than Good Friday and the great sight of the Cross. Him whom we saw on Good Friday dead for our sins, we see at Easter risen again for our justification. Have we sinned, so as to have been the slave of seven devils, have we denied Jesus before men, and have we, after our sin, repented, seeking Jesus that was crucified ? Then we may hope to have our place near to these two great examples of penitent love. Was it not His love which drew them to penitence, which has drawn them to the tomb ? Yes, if His love has awakened an answering love in our hearts, if we have wept, as they wept, in the remembrance of our sin—if we have sought Him in spite of the mockery and the injuries of men—our hearts will be gladdened with the sight and the voice of the risen Lord. He will love us, and will manifest Himself to us. Not because we are the more worthy—for that we are not ; but because, in our sadness, we especially need comfort and assurance.

When our hearts fail us in the remembrance of past sins, let them be comforted in the remembrance of the Easter morning. We have repented. We have loved. Therefore we are His. He will comfort us Himself, and that right early.

428. *Jesus appears to the Women.* St. Matt. xxviii. 9, 10 ; St. Luke xxiv. 1-11.

BUT is it only to the penitent sinner that He shews Himself? Is there no blessing to those who since they first knew Him have never denied Him on anywise, for those who, like the elder brother of the prodigal, have served Him for many years, and have never transgressed His commandment? All that He does is, we know, good and right. Yet we might be pardoned for wondering if Peter and Mary Magdalene were blessed thus early with the sight of His face, and the other loving seekers at the tomb sent away with no more than the Angel's tidings that He is risen. That other Mary, and Salome, and Joanna, who have come with their spices to enwrap His body, are they not to see Him? Plainly they do not expect to see Him. In their unselfish love they have joy enough in what the Angel has told them. They think not of themselves. He is risen ; and they know it, and may carry the blessed news to the sorrowing disciples.

They had gone out of the sepulchre in mingled fear and joy, trembling and amazed, not disposed to speak carelessly with any, but eager to impart this same wondering joy to the disciples. They run. But He, who is the Lord that filleth all things, and who, after His resurrection, has taken an even greater glory and power to His human nature, needeth not to pass as we pass, visibly, and by bodily movement,

and in a corresponding space of time. He can appear to Mary Magdalene in the garden, and immediately be beforehand with His pious servants elsewhere. As they are running to tell the disciples, Jesus met them, saying, 'All Hail! Rejoice!'

Here then is the reward of their unselfish delight and obedience. They did not linger at the sepulchre, hoping by-and-by to see Him. They have hastened to share the joy; and behold He meets them. There is no surer way of finding the Lord than by going to speak of Him to His servants. Though we may not see Him with our eyes, without doubt, whenever we are on such an errand, Jesus meets us, and blesses us.

At the sight of Jesus their hearts impel them to do what Mary Magdalene just now would have done. With her, love seems to have been stronger than reverence; with these, reverence is as strong as love. Therefore they are permitted to touch Him. They came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. The awe and amazement excited in their hearts by the message of the Angel is increased by the sudden fulfilment of His words. He stands before them, He their Lord and their God. And still, while they hold His feet, and worship Him, they are afraid.

He accepts their worship, soothing their fears, comforting them, and speeding them on their errand with His blessing. They may go on now, and add their own testimony to the word of the Angel.

Why should it thus have been given to women to announce the Resurrection? Many answers are given. As by a woman's fault Sin and Death entered into the world, so by a woman's faith the Son of God was born into the world, and so are women permitted first to speak of the victory over Sin and

Death. Moreover, these women had shewn themselves more loving and more faithful than the men whom He had chosen as friends and brethren. It was just, therefore, that they who were last at the Cross and earliest at the Tomb should have their reward in first knowing of the Resurrection, in first seeing Jesus risen, in first carrying these good tidings of great joy to the Church of Christ.

Who shall tell their disappointment now? They were looking to make the Apostles partakers in their joy. But the Apostles receive their words as idle tales, and believe them not.

429. *Doubt and Faith.* St. Luke xxiv. 8-11.

THE manifestations, or Epiphanies, of the Risen Lord occurred early in the morning, and the news was carried immediately to the disciples. But the day dragged along, wearily and doubtfully, without any corroboration of the women's story. The Apostles had been scattered about the city and its neighbourhood ever since they had fled before the soldiers on the night of the Last Supper; and the report of His resurrection, coming to them separately, found them alike all slow to believe. In great sorrow good news seems too good to be true. It is so easy to be mistaken, so easy for hopeful people to imagine what they wish. As for the disappearance of the Lord's body, that was likely enough, but it proved nothing. The vision of Angels, and the assurance that Jesus was risen, was most improbable. As for the women's tale that they had seen the Lord, what more likely than that, in that dim morning light, they had mistaken some one for Him? So the disciples would argue, too faint-hearted to believe.

The day would pass away, with much anxious thought of hope and fear, with visits to the tomb; with much questioning of the women; with much earnest conversation among all upon His last words and His allusions to rising after death. Peter and John appear either to have held aloof; or, if with the others, to have kept silence as to their own knowledge and faith.

And here the question may be asked—it is one which we cannot help asking,—How is it that the risen Jesus should not have manifested Himself to the disciple whom He loved, and to His Mother? His last earthly thoughts were for her, His last earthly words were addressed to His Mother, and to the disciple who was thenceforward to take His place as a son. Would not then His first words, or His first message, be to her? Would not His first shewing Himself be to her? Or if not, why?

We ask questions in wonder, judging Him by ourselves. But let us remember that, while her heart was pierced through by many sorrows by reason of her love for her Son, it was upheld by a faith which needed not to see. We cannot doubt but that she had heard at least as much as the disciples had heard of her Son's coming sufferings, and of the glory which should follow. His assurance, repeated frequently in His appeal to the signs and types of the Old Testament, that He should rise again, was surely understood by her, though she might not speak even to Apostles of her faith and her hope. To her was that greatest grace of all given, even before the Incarnation, that, having not yet seen, she believed. Whatsoever He had said unto her, that she kept and pondered. John, on the report of Mary Magdalene and on the evidence of the empty tomb, also believed. He needed not to

see the risen Jesus. And she, if she had not known before so as to believe, believed now on his testimony. It was not necessary for her to see Him, nor for John. The manifestations of Jesus on this day seem to be mercies vouchsafed to anxious penitence and feeble faith. But to the higher characters of blameless purity and perfect love there is this glory given, that they shall not see Him with their eyes, as yet; that Faith and Love shall suffice them; until He shall come and manifest Himself, not to sustain and assure and comfort, so much as rejoice with them in the joy which He has won for Himself and gives to them to share.

430. *The Walk to Emmaus.* St. Luke xxiv. 13, 14.

SO the day passed wearily and sadly away. The hopes which the disciples might at first have entertained, grow hourly more dim and faint. Two of them, having lingered in Jerusalem till the evening drew on, are now compelled to take their homeward journey to Emmaus, a village about two hours' walk from the holy city. One of these was Cleophas, whose wife, Mary, had been among the women at the sepulchre. She had certainly seen the vision of Angels. It would seem from St. Matthew's account that she was among those who had seen and worshipped the Lord. If so, her husband had not heard of it. In spite of his close connection with Jesus, as the husband of His Mother's sister and the father of those disciples who were known as the Lord's brethren, he has heard only the general rumours, and his companion is no wiser. Yet they must have heard all that was to be heard; for they speak of Peter and John as 'certain persons of our company,' and say that 'some women from among us' had been early at the tomb.

As they walk they converse of that which was nearest to their heart. Sadness and perplexity had well-nigh overwhelmed them. They had been for long near enough to Jesus to have hoped that it was He which should have redeemed Israel. And this not in a general and uncertain manner. They had seen and heard and observed Him. They had noted His claims to be King and Christ. He was too good to be a deceiver. He had shewed too searching a knowledge of the human heart to have been Himself deceived. He was too mighty in power to have been overcome by human force. He had saved others from Satan, even from death. And after all this He had died, as helpless, as forsaken, as the criminals who hung beside Him! How was it all to be explained? And now there was this rumour that He was alive, a report of a vision of Angels, and the disappearance of the body. This last was an undoubted fact!

So they spoke one with another, viewing the matter in all its bearings; seeing no more light and peace as they drew nearer to their home; the darkness only the darker, the sorrow and unrest only the heavier and more oppressive. They are sad indeed.

It is a very touching picture—these two men, on their homeward journey, pouring out all their souls to each other in converse upon their hopes and griefs. Is it not also a beautiful example? We indeed have no hopes and fears for the Lord Jesus now. We know Him as the Redeemer of Israel. But there is sadness in His Kingdom. His reign is long delayed. His Church is harassed and oppressed. His people are tempted, beguiled, overthrown. His Holy Name is blasphemed. Is there not cause for Christians to be sad? Is there not matter for communing to-

gether as they walk? Yet how little there is of this Christian conversation! Men will come to Church, and go from Church, talking much upon worldly things, talking little upon the things which concern the glory of Christ and their own eternal peace. If out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, too much reason is there to judge that the Name and Honour of the Lord Jesus, and the glory of His Kingdom, are the things least cared for in the hearts of many who call themselves His disciples, and profess to look to Him to be the Redeemer of Israel.

431. *Jesus joins the Two Disciples.* St. Luke xxiv.
15-24.

‘**W**HERE two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.’ St. Matt. xviii. 20. Thus He had promised. Now to these two who were indeed met together, and walking together, in His Name, as His disciples, He fulfils that promise. Jesus drew near and went with them. But the glory and the power of the Resurrection were upon Him. Suddenly, and needing no bodily going from place to place, just as He had appeared to the women, so He joins Himself to these. Here, as there, to be doing the work of Jesus, to be carrying His word to others, to be thinking of Him, and speaking of Him, is indeed to meet Him and to have Him as a companion and a guest. Rightly therefore do men speak of prayer and meditation as being a communing with the Lord. Our eyes see Him not. Nevertheless He is present, hearing us, speaking to us, with us. It is only that our eyes are holden. Else we should see Him.

Thus it was with these two. Their eyes were holden, and they did not recognise Him. Still

there must have been something very sweet and loving in His countenance. Otherwise these men, sad at heart as they were, would never have admitted a stranger to their company, and spoken so freely of what was in their hearts. For, first of all they ran a risk in speaking thus of Jesus which was crucified. Scribes and Pharisees and Roman soldiers were ready to treat the disciples as they had treated the Master. And next, and chiefly, the whole subject was far too sacred for them to speak of before any careless or profane person. Yet, in a minute, His question has drawn it all from them. His look, the tone of His voice, His observation of their sadness, win their confidence, and they speak freely.

And does He not come thus to us—sometimes by His Spirit, sometimes by His earthly ministers—inviting us to pour out our complaint before Him, and to shew Him of our trouble? Ps. cxlii. 2. We are perplexed with some difficulty in the meaning of Scripture, in Church doctrine, in duty; we have hitherto only spoken of it to some friend like ourselves, equally earnest but equally perplexed. He has heard and observed us. He joins Himself to us. But He does not teach us until we give Him our confidence, and tell Him of our trouble, our doubt, and our sore need. He comes, first asking what our perplexity and sorrow may be.

Cleophas, His own uncle according to the flesh, replies by another question. He takes the Lord for one of the devout Jews who have come from far to keep the Passover. Acts ii. 5. Such an one, coming only at the Festivals, and occupied during those few days in his own religious duties, might not have paid attention to the trial and execution of Jesus of Nazareth. Still these things were done so publicly and with so much of notoriety, that Cleophas is

surprised to find anyone ignorant of them. The Lord encourages him to speak, and he goes briefly through the whole story; he mentions his hopes and disappointment, and the astonishing report brought back by the women and by his fellow-disciples.

We sometimes doubt the necessity and the advantage of prayer. Why go through it all in so many words? men ask; He knows all without your telling Him. Very likely. Still He would have us tell Him all. Here is a case in point. Jesus, who knew all, who had indeed suffered all, induces His servant to speak, that out of his own mouth He may bless him, and may give according to the word of the speaker.

432. *Christ in the Scriptures.* St. Luke xxiv.
25-27.

‘**H**IM they saw not.’ Cleophas has, in these words, declared his own perplexity and unbelief. In spite of the empty sepulchre, the vision of the angels and their assurance that Jesus was risen, in spite of the later visit of Peter and John to the place where the Lord had lain—‘Him they saw not.’ And that sight of Him was necessary ere they could believe. What will the stranger say?

Then with gentle but keen rebuke the Lord began. The Eternal Word and Wisdom of God took the sacred words by which the Spirit had spoken of Him from the beginning, and flooded them with His Light. O foolish they, seeing the Cross and the tomb, to have doubted therefore! Rather ought they to have seen in every humiliation one more proof that He was the Christ. It was of these sufferings that Moses and all the prophets testified; only by these

could Christ enter into His glory. So He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Oh, that every word of Jesus had been written for us, that we too might know to the full how the Scriptures testify of Him! Oh, that we knew exactly how each prophecy speaks of Him, how each type represents Him, how each saint reflects Him! Gracious indeed were all Christ's words, words of eternal life! We would not part with one of them. But humbly we may wish for these, that we might read the Scriptures of the older covenant in their full light. We too may humbly wish that our hearts were made to burn within us, by His leading us on through all the mazes of Divine Revelation and Providence, lifting the veil and shewing us how the Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy. Rev. xix. 10.

Does He not by this shew us how little the soul is profited by the mere letter of Scripture; how the mind may be led astray, by its very knowledge, from the real drift and purpose of the Word of God; how early education may be darkened by prejudice, so that the clear light cannot shine into the soul? Let us never say that we know the Scripture so well as to require no more teaching, no further explanations. If we could only get its exact meaning, we should be free from many distressing doubts; we could make up many of our unhappy divisions.

Cleophas was humble enough to receive teaching, even from a stranger. Shall we not be humble enough to be taught by His Church, to which He promised His Spirit to guide her into all truth, which He has made the witness and keeper of Holy Writ, the pillar and ground of the Truth? 1 Tim. iii. 15. Shall we not receive her words of blessed

teaching with hearts burning within us as she shews us Christ all, and in all ?

Yet does He not also shew us the value of the words of Holy Scripture, and so of all Christian formularies ? We do not always understand as we read, or as we learn by heart. For long the words may be as mere forms. But if Jesus come and join Himself to us, His teaching will breathe the breath of Life into them. They will be to us so many mirrors reflecting the true Light, as soon as it shines upon them. The seed hid so long, as it were, lifeless in our hearts, will then burst forth, and spring up, and bud and bear fruit. So the Church teaches her young children precious words of deepest truths. They understand not as they learn. But He will come, ere long. And as He speaks, His Spirit shall bring to remembrance, and unfold, and shew ; and there shall be light and fire of love in the now burning heart.

433. *The Breaking of Bread.* St. Luke xxiv. 28-31.

FOR nearly two hours the stranger has held them spell-bound. The dark cloud of sadness has melted into light and joy under the sunshine of His teaching ; and, arrived at their home, they entreat Him to enter with them. He makes as though He would go further, but only as He had delayed to some who sought His saving power, that they may constrain Him. St. Matt. xv. 22. They wish to hear more of His teaching, for it is comfort, light, and life. They would have Him to make His abode with them. St. John xiv. 23. Oh, if men only knew the love of Jesus, what it is, they would desire not only to see Him, but to have Him as their abiding guest.

Thus entreated, He yields. And what wonder? For His promise is that if anyone will open the door to Him as He knocks, He will come in and sup with him. Rev. iii. 20. How much more then when He is not kept waiting at the door, but is constrained to come in! The evening meal is set. They take their places at the table. And He took the bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave thanks.

With any other this would have been only the natural thanksgiving for the daily bread. With Him it was more, and the disciples felt that it was more. Months before they had seen, twice, probably, the breaking of bread and the blessing, in the miraculous feeding of the thousands; they had heard of the Sacramental breaking and blessing after the Passover Supper. Who but He thus brake, and blessed, and gave? It is the Lord. They know Him in the breaking of bread. They had thought to receive a stranger; and lo! the Lord is with them. They had sat down to a common meal, and lo! it is the Sacrament of the New Covenant. The Giver and the Gift is the Living Bread which cometh down from Heaven.

Some may, perhaps, tell us that this was no more than the sanctifying of an ordinary meal by the word of prayer and blessing. But this would be a very poor interpretation. If this were all, why this use of Eucharistic language throughout? Why this solemn taking of the loaf, this blessing, this breaking, this giving to them, instead of leaving one of them, as master of the house, to distribute the food? It is a Sacramental Feast, with Sacramental grace accompanying; and in the opening of their eyes we observe a reversal of the evil knowledge which came on our first parents by eating of the forbidden tree.

Then, by eating, their eyes were opened to know themselves and their separation from God. Now by eating, the eyes of these are opened to know Jesus, the Son of God, really present with them. To them it is given in the Breaking of Bread to discern the Lord's Body; yea, to discern Himself, the Living Christ, to partake not to condemnation but to life. 1 Cor. xi. 29.

'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee.' Job xlii. 5. So spake a Patriarch of old. They had heard Him by the hearing of the ear. Now their eye seeth Him. Seek Christ in the Scriptures, if thou wilt. Thou shalt surely find Him there, if thou seek aright. But seek Him also in the Holy Communion. For there, not less, shalt thou find Him, and see Him and know Him. There shall He make thine heart to understand His previous workings. There shall He make thee remember with joy what He hath spoken and done for thee already. For thus He not only shews thee, but gives thee, Himself.

They know Him. And He vanishes out of their sight. Yes; sight fails. But faith possesses Him, though unseen. And having Him, it has all and abounds.

434. *The Return from Emmaus.* St. Luke xxiv.
32-43.

IN the very moment that they know Him, before they can express their faith and joy, and offer Him their worship, He is to be seen no more. Yet He has not gone away from them as a man goes away from his friends. He has become invisible. It was certainly the Lord. But what new power is this that He should be so long with them, under

another appearance, so that they should not recognise Him, St. Mark xvi. 12; and that He should disappear thus suddenly before their very eyes? Now they can believe and understand all that was told them this morning. It is the same Jesus. But how changed! Their thoughts are almost too deep for expression. With brief mutual acknowledgment of the wonder and joy burning within, they hurriedly retrace their steps to Jerusalem. What a change since they quitted the city only a few hours ago! Then they went their way weeping. Now they return with joy, as the reapers bring home the sheaves from the full harvest. Ps. cxxvi. 6.

They would go, perhaps, first to the house of Salome. There they learn that the disciples are met together; most probably in that same upper chamber where the Lord had kept the last Passover with the Twelve. Hastening thither, they find the doors closed; but admittance is immediately given to these well-known and dearly-loved friends. That little company are still confused between doubts and hopes and fears. It was as a matter of precaution that they had closed the doors, lest the Jews should continue their persecution now the Sabbath has passed. But they have other and heavier fears not yet removed. Peter has been telling them that he has seen the Lord. Before Cleophas and his companion can speak, the more hopeful of the company have turned to them with the glad news: 'The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.' Still upon other faces there remains a cloud, and all turn to the new-comers for news which shall confirm either hope or fear.

The countenances of these two would have already expressed their belief in Peter's statement. Now they speak. They have seen the Lord like-

wise. If Mary Magdalene were mistaken, if Peter were hasty, in supposing that it was really the Lord who appeared, they at least cannot be deceived. For they have had more than a hasty glance, and a brief word. The Lord has been with them for more than an hour, speaking with them as never man spake—yea, as He Himself never spake before, teaching them as only a teacher from God could teach; at last making Himself known to them in the Breaking of Bread.

Their listeners cannot even yet admit it. They are slow to believe a thing so contrary to all experience.

Suddenly, in the midst of their debate, they are conscious of the Presence of One standing among them whom they had not seen to enter. No knock at the door had sought entrance from the keeper. No footfall had caught their ear. The well-known voice breaks upon them with, 'Peace be unto you!'

Startled and terrified, they look round. It is the Lord!

435. *Jesus appears to the Ten.* St. John xx. 19.

AT last He is among them, then! They can no longer doubt. It is the Lord, risen, alive. How has He entered thus? Is He really in the flesh, or a purely spiritual being, having laid aside His body for ever?

Surely they ought not to wonder and ask, they who had seen Him walking over the raging waters: St. Matt. xiv. 25. Surely they ought not to think that He is but a spirit, a ghost, they who had seen the dead flesh of Lazarus revive and come forth from the tomb, and live again among men! Gently He rebukes them, and gives the proof which their

weak faith desires. They may handle Him, if they will, and satisfy themselves that He is no spirit. They may touch His wounded hands and feet, and convince themselves that He is Jesus which was crucified. He has taken up the words of comfort which He had spoken in the chamber of the Last Supper. He bids them not be troubled or afraid. He speaks to them that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

In one sense it is surprising that they should be glad. Had they not denied Him and forsaken Him? Had they not separated themselves from Him, forfeited His confidence and His love? Would He not choose for Himself more trustworthy followers? So we may ask, feeling for ourselves that we should have shrunk from meeting Him, in very shame and fear. We too shall have to meet Him some time, the Day of Death, the Day of Resurrection, when He shall come to judge the world. How shall the best of men, the purest of Saints, meet Him, and be fearless and glad in His presence? It will be, surely, that He shed forth then, and will shed forth in that Day, from His countenance some look of forgiveness and acceptance; that He spoke then, and will speak in that Day, words of peace, which will restore the fainting soul, which will blot out from its memory the painful record of former sin, and bless it with the assurance of perfect reconciliation and acceptance. In that Day the disciples will be glad when they see the Lord.

In all other senses it is not surprising that they should be glad. They loved Him. Yes, weak as they were, they believed in Him in spite of all, and loved Him. What Peter had said for himself was true for the whole body of disciples, Judas ex-

cepted: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' The sight of Him, returning unharmed, victorious from the tomb, with His words of peace, awakened new hopes that He would speedily restore the kingdom to Israel, and fulfil all His promises. Something selfish there was, no doubt; but much most unselfish, much which rejoiced for His sake, in His glory, in their recovery of His beloved Presence. If any misgiving remained, His first salutation of 'Peace' should have removed it; and if not the salutation by itself, His tender rebuke, which was in itself a blessing. Why are they troubled? Why do doubts and misgivings arise? Let them behold the five wounds, the dear tokens of His Passion. Let them touch them, if they will.

He is to them as the serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness, as He said. Sorely hurt as they had been by the fiery serpent, they turn to look at Him. And straightway the deadly disease of unbelief is healed. They are made perfectly whole; sorrow is turned into joy. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

436. *The Resurrection of Jesus an Earnest of ours.*
1 Cor. xv. 20-28.

FROM the fall of Adam the fear of death had kept all mankind subject to bitter bondage. Heb. ii. 15. Holy men in the earlier generations were sustained by the promise of a Redeemer. But their children, as they fell away into sin, lost the knowledge of God and the comfort of His promises. They lived by sight instead of faith. Thus the pleasures of the present world beguiled them; its afflictions overwhelmed them; the hopes of the

world to come being uncertain, and far off, were forgotten or despised. Death seemed the end of all. Their motto was, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'

Nevertheless, some among the heathen learned from the works of creation the goodness and love of the Creator. Observing the frequent prosperity of the wicked, the frequent adversity of the just, they reasoned that there must be a future state where the wicked should be punished and the just rewarded. They believed, therefore, in a life after death, a life of the spirit when this sinful flesh should have mouldered into the dust. The body they looked upon only as a burden and a clog, a vessel for fleshly indulgence, a veil which hid God from the eyes of their mind. These longed for death, that they might enter into the life of freedom, and purity, and light.

The Jews, being taught of God, knew more of this. A few, such as the Sadducees, denied the resurrection of the body. But the Pharisees and the rest of the nation looked for the day when the long-buried bones should once more live. This was the faith and hope of the holy men of old; this was declared in the very Name by which God made Himself known to Moses, as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of living men, who should be made perfect in body and soul, united in the fulness of time. St. Matt. xxii. 29-32. To this David and Job had looked in their times of heaviness. Ps. xvii. 16; Job xix. 26, 27. Of this had Isaiah prophesied. Isa. xxvi. 19. This had Ezekiel seen in a vision. Ezek. xxxvii. 1-14. This had Jesus declared in word to His disciples more than once. St. John v. 27, 28. Now He declares it, more wonderfully still, by act. That same Jesus

whom they had seen crucified, dead, and buried, is this third day risen from the dead; not a spirit freed for ever from the burden of a body of humiliation, but that same Jesus, true man, in that same flesh which He took of His Mother, and in which He suffered on the Cross; scarred with the five wounds of His Passion, that by them men might know Him, if they knew Him not in the glorified beauty of His risen Body.

So shall it be with us all. The body of Jesus is not the only one to rise victorious over death. Christ, the first-fruits. Afterward they that are Christ's at His coming! And not they only, but those that are not Christians also. The Resurrection of Jesus is the proof and earnest to the world of the life of the body after death, the same body. If He had never risen, or if He had not shewn Himself to the disciples in His risen body, we might have doubted what the future life might be. But seeing Him, Christ the first-fruits, we know that all men shall rise again with their bodies to life or death eternal.

437. *Mutual Recognition in the Risen Life.* 1 Cor.
xv. 35-49.

STRANGE indeed it is that men should speak so uncertainly as they often do of the life of the world to come, when Scripture speaks so much and so distinctly concerning it. How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Shall we have the same bodies? Shall we know each other, and love each other, in that better world? Or will all the likeness of earthly feature and character have passed away, all earthly affection be merged in the single love and contemplation of

God? Questions often asked; asked eagerly, sadly, doubtfully. Does not the Resurrection of Jesus answer them all, and answer them as the loving heart would have them answered?

It is true that the disciples did not at first know Him; partly because their eyes were holden, partly because the Glory of the Risen Life was His. But when their eyes were opened they recognised Him. How? By their remembrance of Him of old, by the features, the voice; and especially by the wound-prints in His hands and feet and side, which He invited them to behold and to touch. He was the same Jesus; recognised then, recognised in His ascended Life by Stephen, standing on the Right Hand of God; to be recognised by us, hereafter, we humbly hope, by those dear tokens of His Passion, the glorious scars of the thorns, and the nails, and the spear.

And as His saints shall know Him, so shall they know each other. How else should St. Paul look forward to presenting every one of his children perfect in Christ Jesus? Col. i. 28. How else should the redeemed feel the mercy of their salvation, how should the lost admit the justice of their punishment, except in the consciousness that they are the same men, body and soul, as when they conquered, or fell, upon earth? They must, in the risen life, feel themselves to be the same men; they must be the same to others; and those others, whom they knew upon earth, they will know again then; the same persons, except for the change which shall have passed upon them for eternal glory and joy, or for eternal shame and woe. And so each shall know the other and be known. The redeemed shall know each other, not only by the memories of earth, but, no doubt, by a Divine teaching. They

shall know God in the Beatific Vision, as it is called, in the mystery and glory of the Eternal Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They shall know the Archangels, and Angels, and all the blessed spirits that stand before the Heavenly Throne. They shall know the Blessed Mother of their Lord, Patriarchs and Apostles, Martyrs and Confessors, Saints of all peoples and times. They shall know those whom they have loved on earth, and joy together in their common salvation. This Communion of Saints in light and speech will make the bliss of that life, after that highest blessedness which is to see Him as He is. As the Great Shepherd knows His sheep and is known of them, even so shall they know one another, in the perfect love, the perfect relationships, of the life to come.

But what if some we have known and loved on earth are missing from the company of the blessed ones? Will not our joy be clouded? That is one of the mysteries of the future life which we cannot explain now. Yet this we are sure of, that none will be cast out who love Him; and that if His infinite love can part with them, our love for Him shall not longer grieve over those who have despised Him. They will have broken with us, as they have broken with Him, for ever. The Lord grant to us, and to ours, to obtain the better resurrection, to be here, and there, all one in Christ Jesus!

438. *The Glory of the Risen Jesus.* St. Mark xvi. 12; St. Luke xxiv. 36-43.

WE must not forget that the Lord, though He rose in the very same flesh which He took of the substance of His Mother, received a glory and power to His risen body which it did not enjoy

before. That change which we look for in our bodies in the resurrection unto life, was first manifested in His body. 2 Cor. xiii. 4. For thirty-three years He had been seen among men with no beauty that they should desire Him, bearing our infirmities, hungering and thirsting, faint and wearied in body, grieved and depressed in spirit. Two or three times in His ministry He had taken to Himself something of more than earthly power and glory, as when He walked upon the water, when He was transfigured before them, perhaps when He withdrew Himself from the angry men of Nazareth. St. Luke iv. 30. But after His Resurrection we observe a mighty change. He is not recognised at first, even by Mary Magdalene, or by the two disciples at Emmaus. Even in this upper chamber some doubted, and were afraid, thinking that they had seen a spirit. He has passed suddenly from one place to another. He enters through the closed doors. He eats with them, but only this once; not for refreshment in weakness, but that they may see that it is really He, in the flesh, and not as a spirit. He is with them suddenly, and as suddenly disappears. When He is absent they know not when they shall see Him next; while He is with them they know not how soon He will vanish out of their sight. They are parted from Him in Jerusalem, and they go away into Galilee as He had told them. After a night's fruitless toil in the fishing-boat they see one walking on the shore. He speaks with them, He gives them His commands, but they know Him not. In the miracle they recognise Him. Yet even then, when they stand upon the shore, eating of the bread and the fish mysteriously prepared, none dares to ask Him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. St. John xxi. 1-14. They knew

Him then, but with that wondering uncertainty which we sometimes feel when we meet a dear friend after many years. It can be none other than he, we think; and yet how changed! So, again, when He met those five hundred brethren at once. They knew Him, and worshipped Him. But some doubted. St. Matt. xxviii. 16, 17. Even those that recognised Him felt the change, or, not feeling it, like Mary Magdalene, were made to feel it. He teaches them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. But it is little that they dare to ask Him. And when they ask, He gently chides. It is not for them to know more than He is pleased to tell.

His body has all the powers of a spirit; it has become a Spiritual Body. Yet no less a real body, for it can be seen, and handled, and can take food. The beginnings of Heaven are upon it. On the earth it is, and among men. But it has been—can we doubt it?—changed and glorified by the Resurrection; it partakes already of the glory which belongs to Him who has received all power in Heaven and Earth. Men sometimes argue that because Christ's Body and Blood are in the Blessed Sacrament only after an heavenly and spiritual manner, therefore He is not really present. But is not His Presence all the more real because it is spiritual? Was not all His Presence upon earth after the Resurrection after an heavenly and spiritual manner? And will not our own future life be the life of bodies raised from the dead, incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual, heavenly, immortal, after the pattern of the body of the risen Jesus? Oh, what a wondrous life will that be! Again we pray, 'The Lord grant us so to be raised up at the last day!'

439. *The Blessing of Peace.* St. John xx. 19-21.

IF this sudden appearance of the risen Lord is striking, not less so are His words. His life hitherto had been ministry of deed and word; but it was rather the foreshadowing of a Kingdom that was approaching and soon to appear, than of a Kingdom actually established; rather the preaching of good things soon to come than the actual bestowal of those things. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; 2 Cor. v. 19; but that reconciliation was not complete till He had died, was not proclaimed on earth till He had risen. He was our Peace; but that peace was only made by the Blood of the Cross. Col. i. 20. Then it was finished, and the gift of peace was in His hands for whom He would.

Now that the God of Peace had brought Him again from the dead to be the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, Heb. xiii. 20, He may bestow upon the disciples that Peace which He had given by promise indeed, but which they had not yet actually enjoyed. St. John xiv. 27. For they had denied Him and forsaken Him. Drawn to Him as they were by love, they scarce dared to meet His eye, lest He should rebuke them by look and word. His Presence at first, instead of bringing peace, troubles them. It is for Him to speak. Is it peace? Yes. He is the true Melchizedek, King of Salem, which being interpreted is, King of Peace. Heb. vii. 2. ~~Therefore~~ He comes to bless; and His first greeting troubled spirits is, 'Peace be unto you!'

It is the power of the word of Jesus, that of Peace is no common salutation, after the Jews, no mere kindly wish on the part of the speaker; it is a gift. His peace

made theirs, the very blessing of peace, to rule in their hearts, to keep them perfectly, even while their doors are closed for fear of the Jews. In Him they have peace.

As they recognise Him, and rejoice in seeing Him, and have this peace in themselves, He repeats the blessing. That peace which He has given them for themselves first, He gives them also for the world. He is about to send them forth to preach peace to all, to them that are afar off and to them that are nigh, Eph. ii. 17; the true peace of sin forgiven, of enmity abolished, of God and sinners reconciled, of the restful conscience, of the sure and certain hope. The peace of the risen Jesus is the key-note of the Gospel; assured, first, by His own word to those who are to preach that Gospel, that they may tell of a peace which they themselves have found; repeated to them, that they may have, not for themselves only but for the world, the fullness and superabundance of the peace of God in Christ. That which Angels sang around the cradle of Jesus, that the priests of His Church are to proclaim around His throne: 'Peace on earth, goodwill towards men.'

440. *The Christian Ministry.* St. John xx. 21, 22.

FIRST He has spoken peace to them, a peace which carries with it pardon also. Else there were no peace. Then having thus reconciled them and brought them near unto Himself, He speaks unto them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. Acts i. 3. He is going to the Father. It is for them to continue the work which He has begun; to reap the harvest for which He has sown; gather in and feed those other sheep which are

not of the fold of Israel, St. John x. 16 ; to lead the armies of the Cross ; to bear rule in the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. This He had promised them ; for this He had prepared them at various times. Now He is anointing them, arming them, crowning them, sending them. They have only to wait for the promise of the Father, until they shall be endued with power from on high. St. Luke xxiv. 49. Then they shall go forth to subdue the world.

‘As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.’ Marvellous words, indeed ! telling of a power given by God to His Son, passed on by the Son of God to these His chosen servants ; a power, again, to be exercised by them, and in turn handed on by them to faithful men after them, even as it had been committed to them by the Son of God. These faithful ones again were in their turn to hand down this same power in continual succession to others after them. 2 Tim. ii. 2.

So the Church interprets these words. So she has sent her priests to minister before God and to men. The power and authority which Jesus gave to His Apostles at this time has been handed down to His priests even unto this day. That power and authority which the priests of the Church claim to exercise in the ministry of the Word, and Sacraments, and spiritual discipline, is no vain boast, no proud assumption of their own. It comes to them through the ordaining Bishops, through the Apostles, from Christ Jesus Himself. As the Father sent Him, even so sent He them. And He breathed on them, and saith unto them, ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost.’

A Priesthood there had been in all ages ; first in the head of each family ; then, after God had

chosen to Himself the family of Jacob to be a royal Priesthood and a peculiar people before Him, in the Tribe of Levi. This Priesthood was done away when Jesus the Son of God came, the Great High Priest, consecrated by the Holy Spirit to offer the one Sacrifice for sins for ever, in His own Body slain upon the Altar of the Cross, presented before the Father continually in Heaven on the Golden Altar which is before the Throne. His is the only True Priesthood, the one only True Sacrifice. But, ascending into Heaven, He left behind Him, consecrated by that same Holy Spirit, the Priesthood of the Christian Church, a better Priesthood than that of Levi, with wider and more blessed powers, to plead His better sacrifice on our earthly altars, until His coming down. And in this Priesthood, handed down in these same words by which He ordained the Apostles, the Great High Priest abides with His Church, even unto the end of the world, working in effectual ministry to the Glory of the Father and the salvation of men.

441. *Apostolical Succession.* St. John xx. 21, 22.

IN these words we have the institution of the Christian Ministry. By this we mean the ordination of certain persons to minister before the Lord, and to minister unto men in things pertaining to God, Acts xiii. 2; Heb. v. 1, with authority and power to appoint others after them in succession. 2 Tim. ii. 2. We mean that no person may take upon himself the ministry of Christ's Word and Sacraments, but those who are called and sent by the higher officers of the Church, that is, the Bishops; and that to the Word and Sacraments ministered by them there is a grace promised and

attached which is not promised and attached to the words and actions of those who take this office upon themselves, or who exercise it only as being called thereto by men without authority from Christ.

The Lord Jesus only can give this authority. Of course He can give it in any way He pleases. And the way which He has appointed is by a regular and visible order, a very simple way, which all can understand.

First, He came Himself.

And while He was going about doing good, He had the needs of His Church in mind. All those three years He kept chosen men about Him, proving them and instructing them. He called them first *disciples*, or *learners*; and they called Him *Master* and *Teacher*. The chief of these, twelve in number, He afterwards called *Apostles*, or *sent*. When the time of His departure was at hand, He breathed on them, solemnly, saying, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' And He gave them the power to remit and to retain sin. After His Ascension, He poured out the Holy Ghost on them, for the work of the ministry. Eph. iv. 7-14.

But they were only mortal men after all. What was to happen after their death? Was no provision made for this? Was anyone who pleased, or who fancied he had an inward call, to set up for a preacher of the Word, an Ambassador of Christ, and a Steward of the Mysteries of God?

No. - All was in order. These Apostles were sent, as the Father had sent Him. In those forty days between His Resurrection and Ascension, He spoke to them of the things concerning the Kingdom of God, that is, His Church. When more ministers of the Word were wanted, the Apostles

knew what to do, and they appointed and sent *Deacons* by prayer and laying-on of hands. Acts vi. 1-8. As churches multiplied, and more pastors were wanted, the Apostles ordained others by laying-on of hands, *Elders* now, as well as *Deacons*. And, further, as the Apostles looked forward to their death, they appointed men of higher authority still to succeed them in their office. And so—by the laying-on of hands always—they ordained Chief Pastors, or *Bishops*. So St. Paul ordained Timothy to be Bishop at Ephesus, and Titus to be Bishop at Crete. 1 Tim. i. 3; v. 22; Tit. i. 5. Thus we have in the lifetime of the Apostles the three orders of Clergy—Bishops with authority over large cities and districts, who alone had power to ordain other ministers; Elders, to rule under the Bishops, to preach the Word, celebrate the Holy Eucharist, and administer the Sacraments; and Deacons to assist the Elders. We have, in fact, the threefold ministry, by Apostolical authority and succession, to our own day. Every Clergyman has been ordained by some Bishop. Every Bishop was consecrated by Bishops before him. The first Bishops were appointed by the Apostles. And the Apostles were sent by the Lord Jesus. This is what we mean by Apostolical Succession.

442. *The Power of the Priesthood.* St. John xx.
22, 23.

SOME would limit the commission of the Apostles and the Clergy to the public preaching of pardon and peace won for the world by the Blood of Christ. This is truly a most blessed and glorious message. But surely their Lord's solemn sending of the Apostles, His breathing on them and giving them

the Holy Ghost, His wonderful words investing them with authority to remit and to retain sin, must mean far more than this. And, indeed, our poor fallen nature craves for more than this general information about forgiveness. We want something directly from God to ourselves. The grief, and burden, and fear, of the troubled conscience is its own sin. That I have sinned against my God, my Father, my Redeemer, my Sanctifier—this is my grief. That I am lying under my Lord's displeasure—this is my burden. That I am in danger of eternal damnation—this is my fear. I want more than a *general* message of love. I want the ministry of reconciliation brought home to my heart. I want to hear the voice of an ambassador of Christ saying, with authority, to *me*, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace.' This blessed assurance was granted under the Law. The Jewish priest, by the sin-offering, was able to make an atonement for the sin of the offerer, and to secure for him the Divine forgiveness. Lev. iv. 35. The Gospel of Jesus cannot be inferior to the Law of Moses in this respect. The Apostles of Jesus cannot be inferior to the priests of the Tabernacle. Therefore the Great High Priest of the New Covenant ordains His new and better Priesthood with larger and simpler powers. As He gave them His peace, for the blessing of the world and the comfort of distressed souls, He breathed on them, and said unto them, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained.'

Wonderful words! Yet only the fulfilment of a promise given and renewed many months before, first to Peter, then to the twelve. St. Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18. On another occasion He charges Peter,

as the representative of the rest, to feed His sheep and His lambs. St. John xxi. 15, 16. On another, as being possessor of all power in Heaven and Earth, He commands them, *therefore*, to go and make disciples of all nations. St. Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. The Apostles did not interpret these as empty words. They acted upon them, exercising these spiritual powers, bearing rule over Christ's household, feeding and tending His flock. They dared to pronounce on disputed questions as it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them. Acts xv. 28. They forgave the penitent offender in the person of Christ—that is, as representing Christ. 2 Cor. ii. 10. They delivered the impenitent and obstinate over unto Satan. 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Tim. i. 20. They claimed to exercise a stern and beneficial discipline as overseers, shepherds, rulers, in the Church. Acts xx. 28; Heb. xiii. 17. They spoke of those who separated from the Church, as to be marked and avoided, Rom. xvi. 17; as sensual, not having the Spirit, feeding themselves without fear, and despising the shepherds and the pasture which Christ had provided. St. Jude 19.

Christ's Church is a Kingdom, of which Christ is the Head. But He has left His servants behind Him, to occupy till He come. St. Luke xix. 11-14. Rather be thankful for the grace which they minister than jealous of their office. For it is to the Church, not to themselves, that they minister.

443. *The Ministry of Absolution.* St. John xx. 23.

SIN is the one great evil in this world of ours, corrupting the whole nature, tying and binding the soul in a chain of iniquity. If the soul is ever to turn to God, and serve Him and love Him, it

must be set free from the punishment, it must be reconciled to God, and have assurance of pardon and peace.

How is that comforting assurance to be brought to it? By the way provided by the Lord Jesus. He sent His Apostles, and through them His priests even unto the end of the world, with power and authority to remit the sins of the penitent, to retain the sins of the impenitent. Whosoever therefore would have the remission of his sins, must to a true faith in God's mercy through Christ add a true repentance. He must be sorry for his sins; he must confess them; he must amend his life. Then the pardon shall be given him, the pardon won by the Blood of Jesus.

This forgiveness of sin was first made ours, and sealed to us, in our Baptism. But, in spite of the grace of Baptism, we all sin, and deeply. Few of us escape deadly sin. And then our conscience grows dull; we are slow to find out all our secret yet deadly sins; slow to repent of them; slow to recover what we have lost. Therefore, the Lord Jesus left to His Church the power of discipline and absolution; of discipline—that sinners being punished in this world, their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord; of absolution—that, receiving their Lord's message of forgiveness from His own ambassadors, they might henceforth serve Him without fear in a new strength.

This message of forgiveness is declared day by day, publicly, after confession of sin in the morning and evening prayer. By virtue of the power and authority given him at his ordination, the Priest declares and pronounces to Christ's people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins. This same forgiveness is declared, more directly, in

the Communion Service, and then sealed to the penitent communicant in the Body and Blood of his Lord.

But perhaps we are doubtful whether our repentance is sincere and sufficient ; perhaps, after a painful self-examination, we find the number and burden of our sins so heavy that we cannot quiet our own conscience, but require further comfort and counsel. Then the Church invites us to come nearer and tell her all. That healing balm which her Lord has entrusted to her, she is ready to apply to the wounded spirit. She bids us go to some discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open our grief. This she does also with the sick man, lest he should depart to stand before the Judge with some great sin on his conscience. She lovingly invites us to make special confession of our sins.

And what reward has she for those who thus lay bare their bitter wounds ? Even that healing balm of the good Physician, the benefit of absolution, the authoritative assurance of forgiveness, the remission of our sins. O sin-laden, and wearied, and penitent soul, it is thy Lord who speaks to thee by His earthly minister : ' Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences ! And by His authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.' (*The Visitation of the Sick.*)

444. *The Unbelief of Thomas.* St. John xx. 24, 25.

AT that meeting on the evening of Easter Day, ten only of the Apostles were present. Why Thomas was not with them, we are not told. But,

judging from his remark on the Lord's calling the disciples to go with Him to Bethany, on the occasion of Lazarus' death, St. John xi. 8-16, we think of him as one of little faith and little courage, one always ready to look at the dark side of things, fearful of the worst. He thought that journey to Bethany could only end in their death. Again, at the Last Supper, when the Lord spoke of His going away, and added, 'Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know,' Thomas replied, 'Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?' St. John xiv. 5. His mind sees only danger and uncertainty. He cannot walk by faith; he would have the way pointed out more distinctly. As before he had made up his mind to die, if need were, so now he makes up his mind that all is over. The Lord is dead and buried; these idle rumours of His appearing to the women and Peter are not worth attending to; why should they run the risk of this secret meeting? So he stayed away.

And how much he lost by this! The presence of Jesus had convinced the rest, had driven away all doubts, had shed a perfect joy and peace into their hearts, had blessed them with the Holy Spirit, and given them the power of the Christian Priesthood. Thomas had lost much, because He was not with them when Jesus came. Does not the same loss follow nowadays, when men forsake the assembling of themselves together in Christian worship? Whenever two or three are met together in His name, there is Jesus in the midst of them. Therefore, all who carelessly or idly stay away from church, especially from the celebration of the Holy Communion, lose as Thomas lost. Of them it must be said, 'They are not with the Church when Jesus

comes.' They lose, therefore, the blessing of His presence, the cure of their doubts, the refreshment of their love. They are likely to fail more and more in unbelief and coldness, and yielding to temptation. If they let the fault grow into a habit, their neglect of the Lord in holy worship will end in their denying Him altogether. Seven days' more uncertainty was the punishment of Thomas—seven days of dreary wretchedness; seven days of dogged resistance to the truth which his fellow-disciples pressed upon him. They were happy, in perfect peace. They had seen the Lord, and touched Him. But he is actually scornful of that which makes their joy. Have they found Jesus? Have they touched Him? It will be time enough for Thomas to believe too, when he too has touched the five wounds. Till then he will not believe.

Communion with the Church is the strength of faith. To live alone is to lose the presence of Jesus, to lose grace, to doubt, perhaps, at last, to deny.

445. *The Confession of Thomas.* St. John xx.
26-29.

FROM that Easter night the disciples see no more of their Master, until the Lord's Day has come round again. Those six days pass in mingled joy and hope to all but Thomas. He remains obstinately unbelieving. The Sabbath is over. We may wonder how the disciples spent it; whether they had yet begun to feel its emptiness, and to long for another First Day of the week as already dear to them and glorious from their Lord's resurrection. They remain still at Jerusalem. And on this day they are again together; this time Thomas with

them. Was it in the expectation of His again appearing to them? And was Thomas, spite of his unbelief, wondering, hoping that it may be as they hope? Possibly. For few men can obstinately resist the power of faith in others. He who would persuade his brother, let him first himself believe. Then let him speak. If we fail so often to win souls to Christ, it is because our own faith is feeble.

The doors are closed as before. And suddenly, as before, Jesus stands in their midst with the same blessing of Peace. At once He addresses Thomas, shewing Himself, as ever, the Lord unto whom all hearts be open, from whom no secrets are hid. None have told Him the conditions which the unbelieving disciple required. But He knows. Here are the wounds of hand and side. If Thomas will, he may touch, and be satisfied.

It concerns us not to know whether Thomas did touch or not. In either case his doubts have vanished, like the darkness before the newly-risen sun. The wounds which Satan inflicted upon Jesus in his malice have healed the wounds of unbelief in the disciple's heart; have more than healed them, have strengthened him into a clearer light and a more perfect confession. In a moment Thomas has excelled them all in his adoring exclamation, 'My Lord and my God!' He who just now denied that Jesus was risen, adores Him as His Lord and his God.

So the Lord brings good out of evil. So He permits a disciple to be doubtful of His Resurrection, for the more confirmation of the faith of future ages. When an opponent is convinced, it must be by the goodness of the cause, the strength of the evidence. These are the things which help

to convince us of the truth of the Gospel of Christ—that it was preached by men who were slow to believe at first, who were fearful and faint-hearted; who had little of worldly wisdom to help them; preached among those who crucified the Master, who resisted, threatened, persecuted, and slew the disciples. All the weapons of the Church, so far as concerns this world, were feeble. Yet her message won its way; because it was true; because the Lord Himself was with His servants. Their Master spoke by them. And it was by His wounds that He overcame the world's unbelief. The power of His Cross and Passion drew all men unto Him. And they who had crucified Him as a blasphemer knelt to adore Him as their Lord and God.

Blessed was Thomas in his faith and his great confession. Yet an equal blessedness is reserved for us who, having not seen, have believed, and can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 St. Peter i. 8; who day by day magnify our risen Saviour, praising Him as our God, and acknowledging Him to be the Lord.

446. *My Lord and My God.* St. John xx. 28.

OF all the words addressed to Jesus, these are certainly the most wonderful. They are words of faith and worship, acknowledging Him, simply and boldly, to be Lord and God. Hitherto, 'Son of God' is the highest title which had been given to Him or claimed by Him; a title which did indeed make Him to be equal with God, out of which we reason that He is God. St. John v. 18. Still, it does not strike us as being so clear and decided. Some might be willing to confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and yet deny that He is very God.

These words of Thomas leave no loophole for escape. He plainly calls Jesus 'Lord and God.'

And Jesus accepts the title. He does not put it aside, which He would have done if He had had no right to it, as an Angel or Saint would have done. Rev. xix. 10; Acts xiv. 11-15. His acceptance of it stamps it with His approval. He takes it as His right, as the utterance of a lively and blessed faith. It is but Peter's confession again, yet in a simpler form. Jesus, Son of Man, is Son of God, is Lord and God. By His silence He approves. By His silence He accepts this worship and honour. If the Scripture be true, Jesus is GOD.

After all, Thomas has only put in a simpler form that which the Lord had been teaching them as they were able to bear it, which John had been gathering up and piecing together from the beginning, which he makes the grand cardinal doctrine of his Gospel—the Divinity of Christ. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' 'And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the ONLY BEGOTTEN of the Father.' For our sakes the beloved disciple begins with that which he knew not at the first, but which he saw afterwards with his eagle eye of faith and love. This he shews us again and again, scarcely veiled in so many of the sayings of Jesus. He applies to Jesus terms expressive of His oneness with the Father in substance, in power, in glory, which if applied to any creature would be blasphemy. Our English language hardly brings out their full meaning. Besides, we are so familiar with them, we are so firmly established in the faith, that we hardly stop to weigh these mighty expressions. But St.

John wrote his Gospel when wise men of the heathen, and half Christians, were trying to obscure the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, and to refuse Him the worship which the Church was paying. Therefore he wrote as he did, knowingly, and St. Paul likewise. Thomas's cry of faith was as the first notes of the Creed chanted by the single voice of the Priest at the Altar, and taken up by the full song of many hundred voices. 'Thou, O Jesus, art our Lord and our God. Thou, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father.'

447. *The Disciples at the Sea of Galilee.* St. John
xx. 30; xxi. 3.

MANY have been puzzled by the concluding verses of this twentieth chapter. It seems very much as if St. John had at first intended to stop here. But a little consideration shews these verses to be a link between the two narratives. The Lord had just pronounced a special blessing on those who should believe without seeing. St. John would shew us, therefore, what sure ground we have for believing, although we have not seen. These miraculous appearances and withdrawals were but a few of many miracles which Jesus did, after His resurrection, in the sight of the disciples. And these, like the others before them, St. John has written, having himself seen them, 1 St. John i. 1-4, that we who have not seen might believe in full assurance, and have life in the Name of the Son of God. He will, moreover, add another in which he himself was closely concerned.

The Angel had bidden the disciples, by the women, to go into Galilee. St. Mark xvi. 7. Now that the

Passover week is ended they obediently proceed thither. But what shall they do there? They who have only just now stood face to face with their Lord and God, like men caught up into Heaven, cannot at once throw themselves into the employments of earth. That great week, with its awful events of the Death and Resurrection of the Son of God, cannot be a mere memory. No, it has changed them infinitely more than their first forsaking all and following Him. What is this mighty Future which He is about to reveal to them? Will He at once restore the Kingdom to Israel? Will He at once make them to sit by Him on the Twelve Thrones, judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel? St. Matt. xix. 28. Though He has made them preachers of His Word, they cannot now go forth with the glad tidings. The message which they had spoken hitherto would not suffice for the present glories of their Master and His Kingdom. And He has not yet given them permission to bear witness of His Resurrection, or to declare that God hath made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ. Acts ii. 32-36. They can but speak one to another, as men in a dream, of the past and the future mysteries of the Kingdom. They wait for their Lord.

One evening seven of them are standing together by the Sea of Galilee. Perhaps their little means were nearly exhausted; perhaps the attraction of their old craft had revived. Peter's suggestion is welcomed by the others; and they are once more in the boat which has so often carried Jesus. The net is thrown. But in vain. Has their old skill deserted them, or is it only ill fortune? That night they caught nothing.

An image surely of their spiritual fishing! Fishers of men they were. But this night their Lord is not

with them; the Holy Ghost is not yet given. What wonder then that in their own strength and skill, without these Divine Helpers, they fail! Peter fishes as Paul plants, and Apollos waters. The success and the increase is by the Gift of God. 1 Cor. iii. 6.

That night they caught nothing. A night of fruitless toil was, perhaps, not uncommon with the fishermen on that sea. Nevertheless, would they not think, would they not talk, of that night two years before, when, as now, they had caught nothing; until One came and spoke the word which gave success?

448. *The Morning, and Jesus on the shore.* St. John xxi. 4-11.

MORNING breaks at last. As they near the shore, disappointed and exhausted, they see a solitary figure; and a voice is heard, as of one wishing to purchase from them, 'Children, have ye anything to eat?' He is told that they have nothing, and in reply directs them to cast their net on the right side of their boat. They do as He bids—it was possible that one standing on the shore might have observed a shoal of fish in that direction—and now they cannot draw in their net for the multitude of fishes. This must be something more than mere keenness of sight. John's loving heart sees it all in a moment. He turns to Peter that they may wonder and rejoice together—'It is the Lord!' Peter's eye may be duller than that of the younger disciple; his heart, too, may not be so quick in apprehending the presence of his Lord. But once he knows that the Lord is there, and none shall be before him. In a moment he has again

left all and followed Jesus. Hastily gathering his fisher's coat round him—for he will not even in this moment of excitement forget the reverence due to his Lord—he plunges into the water, and swims to His feet. The other disciples bring the boat to the shore, the loaded net dragging after it. There they see food provided for them by His tender care, a fire, and fish laid thereon, and bread. He bids them first complete their task before they eat. Peter therefore goes to help. They draw the net to land, full of great fishes, which they count, an hundred and fifty and three. Yet, in spite of the weight and number, the net is not broken.

St. John records more of the Lord's discourses than the other Evangelists, fewer of His miracles. But these are (we say it reverently) special miracles, miracles mostly of sacramental teaching. Not that any of the Lord's mighty works are wanting in spiritual instruction. But these recorded by St. John seem to bear chiefly upon the Church, her ministers, and the spiritual powers committed to them as Shepherds of the Sheep, Stewards in the Household, Priests in the Temple, Rulers in the Kingdom. One miraculous draught of fishes had been recorded by St. Luke, ch. v. 1-11; this, which St. John records, is like, yet different. This miracle, like the former, has its scene on the Sea of Galilee; but in that, all is natural, save the taking of the fishes; in this, all is mysterious. There Jesus has been teaching the multitude; the boats are launched out on purpose for the casting the net; the net is let down anywhere, in the deep water; the fishes are simply a great multitude, and the net breaks. It is the image of the Gospel net cast at the word of the Master anywhere and everywhere, not unsuccessfully; souls gathered in, good and bad, no reckoning

taken; the net presently breaking by heresies and schisms; many caught only to be lost instead of safely brought to shore. It is a miracle signifying the Church's present work. Here, Jesus is seen suddenly at the dawn—is it not the morning of the Great Day? He is on the shore—is not that the farther side of the great waters of Death? He requires the net to be cast on the right side; where His redeemed shall then be placed. They, being caught, are drawn to the shore; the Church's net unbroken then, not one of them is lost; as great fishes rewarding those who have so long wearily toiled; their numbers taken; for God knoweth the number of His Elect. Such will be the gathering in of the Saints at the end of the world. St. Matt. xiii. 47-50.

And the disciples are not now called by Him to be Fishers of men. They may sit down to meat as the servants whose work is done. And He Himself serveth them. St. Luke xii. 37.

449. *The Fishes and the Bread.* St. John xxi.
9, 12-14.

IT was not from want of food, either for Himself or for them, that Jesus had asked whether or no they had any meat. Now, as before the feeding of the five thousand, He Himself knew what He would do. St. John vi. 6. As they land, they see food already provided. But they must finish their task. He has given the reward of patient and obedient toil. They must gather it in. Then they may sit down to meat. Jesus saith unto them, 'Come and dine.'

There is an awe upon their hearts, a silence upon tongues. They know Him, that it is He, the

Lord. And yet, evidently, there is that about Him baffling their sense, and prompting the question which they would fain ask, but dare not—‘Who art thou?’ They cannot trust their sight. But faith is truer than sight. And faith tells them it is He.

They have given Him at His bidding of the fish which they have taken. For He would not have us come to Him empty-handed, if we have aught to offer. And He accepts our offering, even though He had given it to us but a moment before. 1 Chron. xxix. 14. He must give to us before we can make Him any offering. But He needs not gifts from us as the condition of His giving to us. Before the disciples have given to Him, His gifts are prepared, those things which wearied men especially need after long hours of toil, the strengthening and refreshing of their exhausted frame. Mysterious gifts, too, are these. The bread, and the fish—whence come they? Are they of His special creating? And again, what are they? Types of Him, who is the Bread of Life, of Him who is represented by the Fish in so many of the ancient pictures and on the walls of the burying-places of the early Christians. For in the letters which compose the Greek word for fish we have the initials of His Name and Title, Jesus, Christ, God’s Son, the Saviour; fish and bread alike fitted for man’s food only by the destruction of the natural life of the creature, by the change wrought by fire, the type of suffering. 1 St. Peter iv. 12. If this is not actually a sacramental meal, it is a figure and type of a sacramental meal, and of the feeding upon Christ the True Bread, the Sacred Fish, as the early Church has called Him and represented Him in the pictures of the Divine Liturgy. The very mingling of doubt and faith carries on the resemblance. What is this?—one

may ask of the Heavenly Manna. For seeing the outward signs of Bread and Wine, men wot not what it is. Exod. xvi. 15. Yet they dare not ask, knowing that it is the Lord, even His very Body and Blood, the Bread which the Lord hath given them to eat. St. John vi. 49-51.

Thus He shewed Himself, thus He was the third time manifested unto His disciples. In His beginning of miracles at Cana, He manifested forth His glory by the blessing of the cup, and His disciples believed on Him. Now in this last of His miracles He again manifests forth His glory, and again His disciples believe on Him.

There are other thoughts springing out of this history—that the toiling life is not unworthy of the greatest Saints, neither of these seven, nor of Paul afterwards, Acts xviii. 3; that in this life of toil, as well as in the life of prayer and watchfulness, the Lord may suddenly reveal Himself to reward with success, and rest, and refreshment, calling us closer to Him for higher and more spiritual tasks. And again He teaches, to our infinite comfort, that the night of fruitless toil is not unmarked by Him, and is no proof of His displeasure; and that when we think we have failed, and, utterly exhausted, are putting back to the shore with nothing done, He may be found watching us, to meet us with His word of counsel, His work of blessing, His welcome of reward, His eternal rest and refreshment.

450. '*Lovest thou Me?*' St. John xxi. 15-17.

THE mysterious meal is ended in silence. By this Breaking of Bread, He has once again assured all of His affection. Then He turns to the Apostle who had chiefly offended, as if He would have from him a special public assurance of love, and would give

him a special and public assurance of restoration. On that sad night of the Lord's betrayal, Peter had boasted himself above his brethren. *They* might fail; *he* would never be offended, though he stood alone. Then came the trial. All were offended, while for a moment Peter stood firm. But he was to be further tried; and in the High Priest's palace thrice he denied his Lord.

Forgiven he was, long since. Jesus had appeared to him alone on the day of the Resurrection; and that same evening further assured him of his restoration by the gift of the Holy Ghost for the priestly office. But doubtless to him, as to David, the remembrance of even forgiven sin was sadness. Doubtless in the fulness of his affection he longed to throw himself at his Master's feet, and pour out all his heart. He loved his Master. And yet how dare he say so, he who had so sinned? He must prove his love by his actions before he could again venture to express it in words.

Jesus, knowing his heart, in tender pity invites him to speak. 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?' It is in kindly caution that He says, 'more than these.' For that was Peter's fault, that he had previously boasted of himself as loving and faithful more than these; and Jesus would try him whether love were sanctified with humility. Yes; the lesson is learned now. Peter will make no comparisons. Enough for him to appeal to his Lord's knowledge of his heart, 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.' The question is asked a second time, and the same reply is given.

But there is a sort of protest in the disciple's reply. He is not satisfied with the word which his Master had used. Jesus had asked, as it were, 'Dost thou care for Me?' And the word is far too

weak to express the disciple's affection. To the question twice asked, 'Dost thou care for Me?' he replies with all the earnestness of his quick sensitive character, 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.' His Lord does know it, and commits to him the care of the sheep for whom He had laid down His life. Then once more, the Lord asks—and this third time He yields the point and accepts the word His disciple had employed—'Simon, son of Jonas, dost thou then love Me?' The grief at having his assurances thus seemingly doubted must have been soothed by the change of word. He replies, 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.'

Presumptuous words they seem. For what proof had he given of his love, he who had one moment boasted and the next denied? Who among us would a second time trust so false a friend? We dare not do so. We cannot prove the heart to know whether the repentance is sincere, whether the renewed purpose is strong to endure. But God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 1 St. John iii. 20. Jesus, knowing all things, knew that Peter's love was true and strong.

Comfort for us here. If the Lord should ask us this question, how should we reply? We could not say anything but 'I love Thee; Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.' Yet men, did they hear us, would point to our denials in act if not in word, our empty professions, our frequent falls, and would say, 'Is this thy love for thy Master?' What shall we answer? We know that their reproaches are just. We know that they are right to doubt us. We know that we are unworthy to be called His servants. And yet we look to Him. He loves us. He pities us. He asks each, 'Lovest thou Me?' His

love draws us to Him. We know, yea, Lord, *Thou* too who knowest all things, *Thou* knowest, that we love Thee.

451. *The Charge to Peter.* St. John xxi. 15-17.

FISHERS of men the Lord had called them to be, and by this last miracle He had again shewn them how greatly they should prosper. Shepherds they are to be also, not only to catch, but to keep, and to feed, and to rule. Three times the Lord bids Peter be a shepherd to His flock. Is not this restoration indeed? For He who so loved His sheep as to lay down His life for them, how should He set over them any whose love and faithfulness were not thoroughly to be trusted?

Again we have a variety of meaning in words which in English are the same. The threefold charge is, 'Give food to My lambs;' 'Be a shepherd to My sheep;' 'Give food to My sheep.' Leading out and guarding, seeking the lost, folding and watching the safe, are the shepherd's duties as much as giving food; sheep and lambs are alike his care. The lambs gathered in by Baptism must be fed by religious instruction; sheep as well as lambs must be guarded and kept under the Church's gentle rule as well as nourished with sound doctrine. The time was to come when grievous wolves should enter in, not sparing the flock; when even from among the sheep themselves there should arise teachers speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Acts xx. 29, 30. The shepherd of the Church, therefore, would have a double task towards young and old; dealing with the flock of Christ as David of old with his people Israel, who fed them with a faithful and true heart, and ruled

them prudently with all his power. Ps. lxxviii. 73. So St. Paul fed and ruled at Ephesus. So faithful shepherds then, and since, have fed and ruled, watching for souls as having to give account. Heb. xiii. 17. So St. Peter, mindful of the Chief Shepherd's charge, counselled the Clergy to feed the flock of God which was among them, taking the oversight thereof out of pure love for souls; not proudly lording it, but as examples to the flock. 1 St. Peter v. 1-4. And the true motive is especially brought out in the Lord's thrice repeated question. Only love for Christ can make the true shepherd of souls; love first, love second, love again. Hast thou love, thou hast all. But this love must look to Him. Self-love will not do. No; nor even love for His sheep, unless it be for His sake and flowing out of love for Him. Else the shepherd of souls may come to think of the sheep as his own, may grudge if they turn from him to a wiser, or gentler, or more faithful shepherd.

'Feed My sheep.' Not all are shepherds over Christ's flock. But many are thus far shepherds, in having to do with the souls of others, with children, servants, some one younger than themselves who looks to them for advice and example. For love of Christ, do what thou canst for the soul of such. One sheep of Christ's thou hast at any rate, to feed and to defend for Him. Dost thou ask who it is? It is thyself, thine own soul. Take heed to thyself that thou wander not out of the fold of His Church, that thou disobey not the shepherd He has set to bear rule over thee, that thou feed not thyself, presumptuously, upon the poisonous herbage and the foul waters of false doctrine. Thou canst not charge it on thy Pastor, if by thine own pride and waywardness thou fail of eternal salvation.

452. *Follow Me.* St. John xxi. 18-22.

PETER'S boast had been—'Though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise.' St. Mark xiv. 31. The denial had been forgiven. What of the boasted willingness to die? This too the Lord accepts. Fellowship in suffering and in death has not been forfeited. He shall be with his Lord in the Cross, before he is with his Lord in the Crown. Time was when the disciple pleased himself; time would be when he should stretch out his hands to the executioners, and be led away to the Martyr's death.

Yet Jesus says nothing about dying. Death indeed it was to be; for all must die. But the great idea left upon the minds of the Apostles is the glory of God; not how Peter is to do credit to himself, or to win a reward, but how he is to glorify God. It is no new thing that the Lord says. Man best glorifies God by denying himself, giving himself to God. Only by so doing, by taking up the cross, could a man really follow Jesus. Peter therefore, having boasted that he would follow Jesus everywhere, even to death, is accepted at last, and in spite of his fall, in his self-devotion. By the sacrifice of himself, he should at last glorify God. Then Jesus adds the seal of all that has gone before: 'Follow Me.'

The words may signify that Peter was to follow Jesus then, as He moved away. But undoubtedly they have this deeper spiritual meaning, that Peter, humbled and restored, shall indeed, as he said, follow Jesus, in all holy service, to death, and through death to glory. Even as the Lord had promised, 'Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.' St.

John xii. 36. Peter did indeed stretch forth his hands, following his Lord in the very manner of His death, dying at Rome upon the cross, but with his head downwards.

This surely should have been enough for Peter, to be accepted in his assurance of love, to be charged with the care of the Great Shepherd's flock, to be permitted to glorify God in his death, to be called again to follow Jesus. But turning, he sees the disciple who had been especially his companion and friend, with whom, possibly, he had spoken of future united labours and sufferings and glory. What is to be his lot? He cannot refrain from asking. 'Lord, and what shall this man do?'

The question was inquisitive and bold. We may not intrude into the future either for ourselves or for our friends. God in His mercy covers it from our eyes. True humility will not seek to know; perfect faith is contented to leave it in His hands. Once more Peter has incurred a rebuke by his intrusive zeal. Christ's will concerning John is nothing to him. His rule has been given him—'Follow thou Me.' In this all wisdom and all knowledge is combined. Whether the saved be many or few, whether thy brother's life be short or long, whether he shall die a Martyr's cruel death, or calmly breathe his last strengthened with all the consolations of the Church and with dearest friends closing his dying eyes, what is that to thee? Whatever thou askest, whatever thou learnest, of the future, thou wilt find no knowledge so precious as this rule—'Follow thou Me.' There is one great pattern—even Jesus. There is one great duty—Follow Him.

453. *Tarrying.* St. John xxi. 22-24.

WHILE the Lord rebukes the too curious disciple He nevertheless in some measure answers the question. John is not to be Peter's companion in an early martyrdom. This, as other things, is to be as Jesus wills.

See how the risen Lord is exercising His Divine Power: 'If I will that he abide till I come.' Who but God is Lord of Life and Death? Who but God could speak of His will being supreme, of human life being prolonged or shortened, of His future coming again? It is in these, as one might say, less solemn sayings of Jesus that His Godhead flashes forth.

John's lot in life is to tarry. Tarry he did for nearly seventy long years, seeing his own brother James fall, first of the Twelve, beneath the sword of Herod, and Saul the persecutor changed into Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ; seeing the rest of the Twelve dispersed to preach, and to die; seeing His Master's prophecies fulfilled in the destruction of the Holy City—which is often interpreted as one coming of Christ; living on to a full old age to witness in his turn a good confession before the persecutors, an exile for the faith; seeing wondrous visions in Heaven of things which should be hereafter; and, at last, after speaking again and again his words of love, dying peacefully at Ephesus. This saying of Jesus lived ever in his mind. He did not himself take it necessarily to mean, as the other disciples supposed, that he should live on to the Great Day of the Second Advent. He offers no interpretation. Yet it is observable that while St. Peter speaks in his Epistle of shortly putting off this his tabernacle of the flesh, 2 St. Peter i. 14,

St. John closes his writings strictly in accordance with his Lord's saying, 'Even so come, Lord Jesus!' Rev. xxii. 20.

What a long waiting was this! And what a blessed thought for those whose lives are prolonged beyond the ordinary span, that they too have their pattern in a disciple, and that the disciple whom Jesus loved. It stands written in the ancient heathen poets that an early death is a mark of the Divine favour. We think so too, when we consider all the miseries of this sinful world, its deceitfulness, its spitefulness, its violence, and its temptations. But here is the disciple whom Jesus loved left to live on while the friends of his youth have all been taken to their rest and joy. Patiently he tarries, serving in the evening of life, to the eleventh hour and past, even as he had served under the burden and heat of the day. It was his Lord's will. Oh, how beautiful is the declining day of the aged Christian! Prov. xvi. 31. The good fight has been fought; the Faith has been kept; the Crown of Righteousness is laid up. A little longer tarrying. If the Lord come not, He will call His servant.

With this St. John concludes his Gospel; not mentioning himself by name; adding only that this is the disciple who beareth witness, and that there are many other things concerning Jesus which might have been written. He indeed did especially bear witness, in Gospel, Epistles, and the Book of the Revelation. For he shews us the Christ, the Man of Sorrows and the Son of Man, the Son of God also and the God of Glory, in His inner life; that which he has seen of Him and heard; that which was shewn to him by special revelation; that also which he knew by the keen sight of his perfect love. And we know that his witness is true.

454. *Jesus Possessor of all Power.* St. Matt.
xxviii. 16-18.

THE Lord had told the disciples to meet Him in Galilee, on a certain mountain; the same probably from which He had spoken His Sermon on the Mount, whither He had often gone apart to pray, where He had gathered the suffering multitudes around Him that He might heal them. St. Matt. xiv. 23; xv. 29. There, on an appointed day, the Eleven meet Him. But they are not alone. For the disciples generally had been told to meet their Lord in Galilee, and there is reason for believing that this was the occasion on which Jesus appeared to the five hundred brethren at once. 1 Cor. xv. 6. Those who had not yet seen Him after His resurrection might be pardoned if at first they failed to recognise Him. It was not so much by want of faith and love on their part, as by the change and glory of His risen Body. They who knew Him worshipped Him, full of that intenser awe with which His presence now restrained their love. Then the doubts of the rest would vanish. All would kneel before Him, as Thomas had knelt. All would adore Him as their Lord and their God.

Were they wrong in so doing? Listen to His wonderful words:—‘All power is given unto Me in Heaven and Earth.’ They had seen much of His power before His death; but so far He was not greatly superior to the prophets of old who had cured the sick and raised the dead. They had as yet no grounds for believing that He was Almighty and Supreme over the heavenly as over the earthly things. Now He was declaring Himself openly, claiming the very highest power, without limit, everywhere. *All* power is His, in the Heaven

above, as well as in the Earth beneath. 'What manner of man is this?' had been their wondering question, as with a word He calmed the stormy winds and waves. St. Mark iv. 41. To-day even that question would not express all that they felt. He claims to be God in Heaven above and in Earth beneath, God over all.

And yet a difficulty. If He has all power *given* Him, how is He supreme? The answer has already been spoken in His earlier teaching. The Father hath delivered all things to the Son, St. Matt. xi. 27; St. John iii. 35; v. 20-23, 26, 27, because He is the Son of Man. As God, Jesus had this power from all eternity. As Man, He receives it in virtue of His Incarnation, and humiliation, and perfect obedience to the Death of the Cross. Now are fulfilled all the prophecies spoken by the holy men of old when they saw the faint glimpses of Messiah's glory. Dan. vii. 14-27.

Two great powers there were in those days—the World of the Roman Empire, the false religions of Satan. Who would have supposed that Jesus of Nazareth could destroy these, and sit as King and God among their ruins? Yet He has done so. And by a greater power than that of force; by the power of truth and love. His Name and His work have been declared, and everywhere men have believed, and loved, and obeyed, and worshipped. Not the wisest Lawgiver, the mightiest Conqueror, the richest Benefactor, ever won what Jesus won, obedience to His teaching and His laws, respect for His power, love for His benefits, adoration for His Deity; obedience, respect, love, and worship, not dying out in forgetfulness or before some new lord; but ever increasing in extent as His Name is known, ever bending more and more hearts before

Him, ever acknowledged by the Blessed ones in Paradise and by the Angels in Heaven, ever to be praised and glorified in the one song of all His creatures in the Kingdom which shall have no end. St. Luke i. 33.

455. *The Great Commission.* St. Matt. xxviii.
19, 20.

WHAT He has said of His power, that they must believe, and on that they must act. These words are the foundation of the Kingdom which they are to build. All power is given unto Him in Heaven and Earth. *Therefore* they are to go and make disciples among all the nations. When He sent them forth before His death, as preachers of His approaching Kingdom, they were to confine their ministry to their fellow-countrymen, not to go among the Gentiles. St. Matt. x. 5. Now His Kingdom is established; they are to go forth *everywhere*, gathering in disciples, all who shall be willing to accept the terms and submit to the Sacrament of admission into His Church, to receive its doctrines and observe its laws.

Little by little He teaches them, but with a strange suddenness, the Mysteries of His Kingdom. He has but this moment revealed to them the greatness of His power. And, almost before they can grasp it, and picture to themselves the Throne of David set up again in a greater King than Solomon, He goes on to tell them that it is for them to do this, not for Him. At least, so far as He will do it, it will be by His unseen Presence and aid. They, these eleven men of Galilee, with such others as they shall associate with them, are to change the religion and the philosophy of the whole world for ever.

When He spoke, they hardly understood. As long as He was among them they were so bound to Him by their strong personal attachment, that they scarcely yet realised how soon He was to be parted from them. They were beloved and loving disciples, rejoicing in His restored presence; looking forward still to His making Himself a great earthly King. They were Jews too, in heart as well as in religion; proud of their peculiar position before God, not doubting that they would still continue the chosen people above all nations. Now see what it is which Jesus has told them. This peculiar nearness is to be done away; the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is to be broken down. They are not even to wait for the Gentile to ask admittance; they are to go out and seek these strangers; to invite and entreat; to gather them in, yes, into closest fellowship and dearest privilege. Such a notion as one universal religion, which should meet the wants of every human heart, and place all in equal position before God, was as new to the Jew as it was painful. And then again, the difficulties! They were not only to confess themselves disciples of Jesus, but to call on Pharisees and Sadducees to become His disciples too. They were to preach this Name of Jesus, and require obedience to the faith in it, among the wisdom-seeking Greeks, the godless, self-indulgent Romans, the miserable barbarians in distant provinces. All these were to be made disciples, were to be compelled to submit to the religion of Jesus of Nazareth and the fishermen of Galilee; all to be admitted into the same brotherhood by the same outward ceremony, as all children of the same Father.

Who shall dare such a task as this? Who should

undertake it with such feeble instruments, men dim of understanding, disappointed in their hope, feeble and cowardly? Jesus dared it, undertook it, and has done it. His very success is in itself proof that He had, what He claimed to have, all power in Heaven and in Earth. Not the eleven, nor the five hundred, but Jesus Himself has done it. Lord, we pray Thee, hasten and complete Thy work. Thy Kingdom come!

456. *The Holy Name.* St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

BAPTISM, the washing by water as a religious rite, was no new thing among the Jews. The Son of God retains an ancient and simple but significant ceremony, the meaning of which was generally understood. But He makes it new, filling it with life and grace by the words, and by the power of the words, which His ministers are to use. They are to make disciples, baptizing them into the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Not *in* the Name; for that might seem merely to signify, by the authority, as a public officer acts in the name of the Queen; but *into* the Name, because by Baptism we become one with Him into whose Name we are baptized. And into the *Name*, not the *Names*; because Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Three Persons, are yet One God.

This Name, thus made known in the Lord's commission to His disciples, is a new revelation of God. The Jews knew God as One. In the ancient Scriptures there are intimations of the great mystery of the Blessed Trinity in Unity; but it was reserved for the True Light of the world to declare it in its fulness. In His previous teaching He had shewn the disciples of His own One-

ness with the Father. He had also spoken to them of the Comforter. But never had He so simply and clearly spoken of the Blessed Three united under One Name; never had He shewn them that God, hitherto known as One, was in some mysterious manner Three, though not less One.

Being baptized into that Name, the believer had part in all the doctrine, the grace, the power, and the blessedness of that Name. The public profession of Faith being made, the Sacred Name was pronounced together with the washing of water. Thus the believer became a disciple, being baptized into the Name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; baptized into Christ.

So he was pledged to a belief in the Doctrine of that mysterious Name. He looked to God, his Father, his Redeemer, his Sanctifier. He sought, in faith and gratitude, for the benefits which God had bestowed and was continually bestowing upon him. He looked for endless life after death.

So he was pledged to an Obedience according to the holiness of that Sacred Name. He undertook, and was required, to keep God's holy will and commandments, as being admitted into His Church and Kingdom.

So he was admitted into the Fellowship of the Church, which is Christ's Body. He took his place in the ranks of the Church militant here on earth; he was made one with the Saints in faith and obedience, one in outward worship, one in mutual love and help, one in the strife and in hope of the reward.

But more than this. We must not lose the full meaning of being baptized *into* the Name. We Christians have been plunged into, and penetrated

with, that Name, even with God Himself. We have been made thereby partakers of the Divine Nature, children of God the Father, in the new creation; members of God the Son by a marvelous incorporation or admittance and grafting into His Body, so that we have put on Christ; Temples of God the Holy Ghost. Our Baptism was not something done *by* us, as a public profession; not something done *for* us by *man*, as an admission into a visible religious society. It was something done in us by God Himself, an actual union with God. For he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. 1 Cor. vi. 17. Then was done for us that which the Lord Jesus asked in His own prayer: 'As thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us. St. John xvii. 21. The Name of God is in some sense the Name of the Church, and therefore of all the baptized. That Name is on us, and around us, and in us. Oh that it may be found on us, around us, and in us, at the awful Day! Rev. xiv. 1.

457. *Faith and Salvation.* St. Mark xvi. 15, 16.

IT was as preachers of the Gospel that the Apostles were first sent out; of the Gospel, that is, of the good news of salvation by Christ. Their message was new and strange to themselves, as being so glorious, so free to all mankind. All that the Lord required at first was, that men should receive and believe their message that God the Son had taken man's nature upon Him in order that, by His death, He might make atonement for the sins of the whole world. All who would believe this message might have their share in it by Baptism into the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy

Ghost. Faith without Baptism was not sufficient. The two must go together. The promise of salvation is to him who believeth and is baptized. This is why the Church speaks of Baptism as generally—that is, universally—necessary to salvation. She only repeats her Lord's words.

But Belief must come before Baptism. What then is Belief, or Faith? It is an important question. The more so, as it is wrongly answered in this present day. In its simplest use, and as required from those who come to be baptized, it must mean belief in the doctrines taught by the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the promises made in that Sacrament that He saves us from the wrath of God. Whoever has faith in this sense may be admitted to the Sacrament of Baptism. But then, following out the many thoughts connected with faith in the teaching of the Lord and His Apostles, we find faith to be much more than a mere consent of the mind, much more than a warm assurance of the heart. It has become at once a strong guide and motive of the conduct. Beginning with consent to the doctrines revealed, and going on to a warm reliance on Christ, it cannot stop until it worketh by love. As it has time and opportunity, so it proves itself by its works. For, while it looks to Jesus as its Saviour, it looks also to the Holy Ghost as its Sanctifier and Strengtheners, and to the Father as the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; and it has respect unto the recompense of the reward. Heb. xi. 6-26. Faith, therefore, is every feeling of the heart, every act of the outer life, which springs from belief in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

And how does the Lord speak of the reward of him who believeth and is baptized? He shall be

saved. Acts ii. 47. What then, again, is Salvation?

Salvation is a present gift. It is the being regenerate and born anew; it is the being made a child of God, instead of a child of wrath; it is the being washed clean from original guilt; it is the being delivered from the slavery of the devil; it is the being grafted into Christ, being made a temple of the Holy Ghost, a partaker of the Divine Nature, a fellow-citizen with the Saints. We, who have been baptized, have been saved; that is, brought into a state of salvation. We have not got to win salvation. We have to keep what Christ has won for us and given us. Our Baptism has saved us. 1 St. Peter iii. 21. But we may lose that which we have received. Therefore we are bidden to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, Phil. ii. 12, to hold fast that we have, that no man take our crown. Rev. iii. 11. Cause of rejoicing we have; not cause of presumption and idleness. We have been saved. Yet we are not safe. Therefore we pray unto God to give us His grace, that we may continue in the same state of salvation unto our life's end. The children of Israel, saved out of Egypt, failed to find an entrance into the promised land. The disobedient angels were cast down from Heaven. St. Jude 5, 6. Even so we, saved as we are, may be cast down, and fail of the Heavenly Canaan. We may sin away the grace and privileges of our Baptism, and be lost at last.

458. *The Life of Obedience.* St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

SALVATION, then, is a present possession, not to be kept without a struggle against those who desire our eternal destruction. We must, therefore, from the principles of the doctrines of Christ, go on

unto perfection. The work of the Apostles cannot stop with the Baptism of their converts. So far the foundation only is laid. Every Minister of Christ must be as a wise master builder, edifying—that is, building up—the souls committed to his charge. Thus the Lord commands His servants to go forth, making disciples first by preaching the good tidings to every creature, and baptizing them into the ‘sacred Name of the Blessed Three in One; then—teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.’

The Christian’s life is no mere fancy, or feeling. It is an anxious strife against spiritual enemies without and within, a stern taking up of the Cross, a faithful imitation of Christ. Salvation is more than pardon for the guilty soul. It is salvation from sin, freedom from the power of the devil, sanctification or holiness; in short, it is a life of love. Ezekiel told of this, wonderfully foreseeing the connection between Baptism and obedience. ‘I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them.’ Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27.

This, indeed, is the great object of the Life and Death of the Son of God, and of the gift of the Holy Ghost. There is no justification without sanctification, no pardon without the grace of holiness and obedience. If love be the fulfilling of the Law—and love is only another name for obedience, St. John xiv. 21—if obedience be the proof of Faith, St. James ii. 18—how can any preacher of the Gospel dare to speak peace to the impenitent and disobedient soul? how can any impenitent and disobedient

Christian dare to hope for the eternal salvation? Too much there is, in our day, of an easy Christianity which speaks much of Faith and little of Obedience, and therefore little of Love. Yet, in reality, it does not speak much of Faith. For that is no Faith which refuses to believe that they that have done evil shall go into the everlasting fire. Rev. xxi. 8. It is the worst of unbelief; it is the denial of the simplest words of Christ.

'*All things, whatsoever* He has commanded.' There is the rule for every Christian preacher, for every Christian disciple. 'If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments,' is as much a Scripture truth as 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Faith and the one Baptism for the remission of sins came first; then the hallowing of that Holy Name into which we have been baptized by a Faith which worketh by Love.

Is it not strange that some should be found to deny this; to be jealous of humble loving service done to Jesus, as if Obedience did dishonour to Faith? And is it not strange again, most strange, that others, who in word would pay Him a strict obedience, neglect that one chiefest commandment of their dying Lord, week after week and year after year neglecting to 'do This,' which He has commanded as the Memorial of Him for ever? Not till we 'do This,' and all else that we can do, not till we have shewn ourselves worthy of being called His peculiar people, zealous of good works, shall we have a right to that full assurance of Faith which can lay hold of the Eternal Salvation won for us only by the merits of the Son of God.

459. *Christ's abiding Presence with His Church.*
St. Mark xvi. 17, 18; St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

LEST they should faint at the tremendous prospect before them, He now comforts their hearts by confirming His former gracious promises. They knew that He was going away. He had told them so both before and since His resurrection. But He had also assured them that His departure was for their advantage; it should bring them the Comforter to work even greater miracles than He had worked; He would not leave them orphans; He Himself would come to them. Now He confirms these promises. They shall prove their Divine authority and the truth of their message by their miracles. He Himself, though departed, would be with them. 'Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the world.'

Such was the promise to Moses, and to many of the Saints of old. Exod. xxxiii. 14; Josh. i. 5. Yet this promise was surely now given in a larger sense. He would be with them not as God only, but as Christ, God and Man, in a nearer Presence than that by which as God He fills all things, upholding all creation. The Church is His Body, of which He is the Head, of which He is the Life. The power of working miracles was to be possessed by them that believed, because He was working with them, confirming the Word with signs following. St. Mark xvi. 20. It was not they that preached, but He; not they that baptized, but He; not they who absolved, but He; not they who ministered before God in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, but He; not they who gave the Holy Ghost in Confirmation and Ordination, but He. The Son of God was with them,

and so they subdued the world to the obedience of the Gospel of Christ. Wherever they met together for worship, Jesus was in their midst. Whoever of them was persecuted, Jesus was persecuted in him ; whoever of them was ministered to, to Jesus the service was done.

‘ Alway, even unto the end of the world.’ The promise then is not confined to those who heard it. A few years, eighty at the most, and the last of the Apostles lay in his grave. But the promise is for all time. One generation dies out and another succeeds, but still the holy Church is here, and her Lord is within her. Though the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not now poured forth as of old in the fulness of miraculous gifts, though the gift of prophecy has ceased, and no inspired Apostle writes his Epistle for us to crush rising heresy and to stablish the perplexed and wavering disciple, nevertheless Christ is with His Church. Still in her doctrines He teaches the Faith once delivered to the Saints ; still in her worship He ministers as Priest before the Father ; still in her Sacraments He is Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, He is the Feeder with His own Body and Blood ; still in her ministry of reconciliation He is Absolver ; still in her bestowal of spiritual graces He is the Giver. How then shall she faint and fail, even though the working of miracles be for a time withheld from her children ? The spiritual graces are still ours, the truth of unchanged doctrine, the ministry of sacramental grace. How dares she shrink from her battle with the world, when she meditates upon His promise, and marks the signs of His Presence ? And how shall she venture to be conformed to the world, and lose herself in indolence and luxury, as she remembers that He walketh among the golden

candlesticks, and knows her works, her labour, her patience, her lukewarmness and her faults?

He is with her, He is with us, always, even unto the end of the world. Then, if only we are found worthy, we shall ever be with the Lord.

460. *The Forty Days.* Acts i. 1-3; 1 Cor. xv. 5-7.

FORTY Days the Risen Lord remained upon earth. That same period of time is connected with much that is wonderful in the lives of many ancient Saints, as well as in the life of the Lord Himself. It has to do always with separation from the world, and with preparation for some great teaching and renewal. We find this period of forty days in the histories of Noah, Moses, the Spies in Canaan, Elijah, Jonah; in the Lord's infancy before His presentation in the Temple; in His retirement and fast before He began His ministry. Now, once more, forty days, before He ascends to His Father to send down the Comforter.

He was in the world indeed, but not of it. He was not seen every day, but only when He was pleased to manifest Himself to the chosen witnesses. Ten such manifestations are recorded; five on the day of His Resurrection—to Mary Magdalene, to the Galilæan women, to Peter, to Cleopas and the other at Emmaus, to the Ten in the upper chamber; the sixth was to the Eleven on the following Lord's Day; then to the seven Apostles at the Sea of Galilee, to the five hundred brethren at once, to James, the Lord's brother; the tenth at His Ascension. There may have been others, but, if so, no mention is made of them. The earlier manifestations seem intended to restore and confirm the faith of the disciples, the later ones to in-

struct them sufficiently for their great office as Bishops and Rulers in His Kingdom. In this connection we find in St. Paul's account an almost new name put into the very first rank. 'After that He was seen of James.' What James was this? And why should the Lord appear especially to him?

This James was not the brother of John, but James the Less, soon to be Bishop of Jerusalem. The others had been sent by their Master as Apostles, Preachers of His Gospel in all the world. They therefore went forth, while James, the Lord's brother, remained at Jerusalem to rule the Church there. He is seen, again and again, in this position of authority, Acts xii. 17; xv. 13; xxi. 18; Gal. ii. 9; a Pillar with Peter and John. Can we doubt that this appointment was made by the Lord's own instruction? And can we not well understand that the Lord, before He departed from His own, would give His servants from His own lips that further teaching which they needed, and which the Holy Ghost would bring to their remembrance, enduing them with wisdom and power to use it aright?

'The things concerning the Kingdom of God.' There are some things ordered in the Church for which we have not direct and positive command in Scripture. But they are not therefore wrong, or even unnecessary, as some people object. Those who refuse Baptism to their infants, who neglect Confirmation, Ordination, and other ordinances of the Church, on the ground that these things are not distinctly ordained, who would judge of everything by the mere letter of Scripture, have forgotten the force of this verse. The Apostles began their ministry and rule in the Church according to their Lord's express commands. He had instructed them; they acted accordingly, and they have handed

down their instructions to us. They did not think it necessary to write down every single thing for us. Their public acts and worship were books which all could read. They spoke with faithful men of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, and delivered the traditions to be kept, and to be handed on from one generation to another. 2 Tim. ii. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 15. Thus the voice of the Lord, speaking to the Apostles of the things concerning the Kingdom of God, has sounded on through them to us. What they did, and what they ordered, was not theirs, we know. It was of the Lord's ordering; and to His voice, speaking by them in His Church, we will humbly and thankfully listen. St. Matt. xviii. 17.

461. *The last Instructions.* St. Luke xxiv. 44-49; Acts i. 4-8.

TEACHER and disciples are again at Jerusalem, for the time is at hand that He should be taken up to the Father. Once more He explains to them the ancient prophecies of Moses, and Prophets, and Psalms, fulfilled in Himself. And to the words which He spoke with His lips and they heard with their ears, He added that spiritual grace without which even the teaching of the Son of God is vain; He opened their understanding. This was St. Paul's prayer for the Christians at Ephesus, Eph. i. 17, 18; this must be our prayer for ourselves, that by the Light of the World shining into our hearts, we may see the wondrous things of His Law.

The two points which He chiefly explains to them are those which the Jewish mind was especially slow to see. Slow because unwilling. They had formed ideas of a triumphant Christ; they could not perceive that it behoved Him to suffer

and to die. They had formed ideas of the continued glory and separation of the Jewish Church. They could not figure to themselves the Holy Catholic Church throughout the world, in which *all* men might find forgiveness and acceptance through a Saviour's Blood. Again, therefore, the Apostles are made to see atonement wrought for *all* men by a suffering Redeemer. The privilege of the Jew was reserved in the Gospel of Salvation being preached to him first, in the Holy City. Rom. ii. 10. Jerusalem was to be the birthplace, and the first home, of the Church of Christ.

The Apostles were doubly strengthened for their task, first in their personal knowledge of the facts which they preached, then in the power which was to be given them by the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. They had but to speak the things which they had seen and heard, that the same Jesus whom the Jews had crucified, Him God had raised and exalted as Prince and Saviour. Acts iv. 20. And the Holy Ghost would give them a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist. Acts vi. 10. For this gift of God they are to wait at Jerusalem. Then should John Baptist's words be fulfilled. They should be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

Still something of the old blindness, the old national pride, the old selfish craving for greatness, seems to hang about them. Had He not promised them that they should sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel? Is this to be soon? Will He by this power restore the Kingdom to Israel? For the same prophecies tell wonderful things of the greatness of Messiah, and of all nations going up to the House of the Lord. Isa. ii. 1-5. They are impatient for this.

But, as before He had gently yet decidedly rebuked the too curious questioner, St. John xxi. 22, so He does now. The Kingdom shall be restored to Israel, in the Father's good time. It is not for mortal man to know. Enough for the servant that he does his Lord's bidding, for before that Day come the Gospel must be preached among all nations. St. Matt. xxiv. 14. Therefore they may hasten that Day by their faithful preaching unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

We, too, sometimes wonder when that good time will come when the Lord will take to Himself His great power and reign. Rev. xi. 15-17. Daily we pray, 'Thy Kingdom come.' Can we not hasten its coming? Surely. The Priest by his faithful ministry of Word and Sacraments, the people by their faithful hearing of the Word and use of the Sacraments; both, by loving self-devotion and mutual exhortation, may be His witnesses everywhere; may have His Kingdom in their hearts, may extend His Kingdom in the world, may be prepared for His return.

PART XVII.

THE ASCENSION.

462. *The Ascension.* St. Luke xxiv. 50-53; Acts i. 9-12.

LOVINGLY asking, and devoutly listening, they follow their Lord as He leads them from the eastern gate of the city towards Bethany. Do they suspect that it is for the last time? Are any wondering eyes turned upon them as they pass through the streets? Does any amazed tongue ask whether this is not indeed that same Jesus who was crucified? Scripture is silent. They descend into the valley through which Kedron flows, and ascend the slope to the Mount of Olives, within the fields of Bethany. His hands are lifted, and He blesses them. Silent and wondering they look at Him; He is passing from them, rising upwards. Fainter and fainter fall His words of blessing on their ears. With straining eyes they follow Him to the last; the blessing of His uplifted hands is upon them as the chariot of cloud receives Him out of their sight. Ps. civ. 3. That is all that they can see of the Son of Man's ascending up to where He was before. He is parted from them, received by a cloud out of their sight.

But beyond? This much is told us by St. Matthew, that He was received up into Heaven,

and sat on the Right Hand of God; by St. Paul, that the Father hath set Him at His own Right Hand in the Heavenly Places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under His feet. Eph. i. 20-22. Do we not seem to see the legions of Angels, those who might not deliver Him from the Cross, now come down to welcome Him and bear Him to His glory? Do we not seem to hear their songs as they bid the everlasting doors be lifted up to receive the King of Glory? This is He who a few years back lay a helpless infant in His Maiden Mother's arms! This is He who a few days back hung bleeding upon the Cross! This is He who lay within the narrow tomb of Joseph! This is He who hath won Redemption and hath conquered Death! Now He is King indeed; now He is Lord and God! Shout, O Heavens, and give ear, O Earth! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!

Who can tell what that glory is? All the weakness of earth put off for ever, all the glory of God taken to Himself again, the glory which He had with the Father before the world was! Shall we not rejoice with the Angels and Saints that this our Brother is so highly exalted? Shall we not daily make our profession of faith in Him, and pray Him by His Ascension, as well as by His Cross and Passion, His Death and Resurrection, to deliver us?

For His Ascension is gain to us. He who sits at God's Right Hand is the same Jesus who lay in His mother's bosom, and died upon the Cross. He has not laid aside His human nature. He has carried it into Heaven. He is true man to all eternity. So

He shews us what our poor frail bodies are capable of, by the power of His Body; how glorious they shall be, when we wake in the Resurrection to the Life of the world to come.

There He stands, our Great High Priest, having carried His Sacrifice-for-ever into the Holy of Holies. Heb. ix. 24-26. There He sits, ever making intercession for us, preparing a place for us, feeling with us in all our sorrows, interposing on our behalf.

Therefore we praise Him and worship Him. Therefore in heart and mind we would ascend and with Him continually dwell. His glory is our gain even now, and an earnest of our glory with Him in the Day of His final triumph.

463. *The Return to Jerusalem.* Acts i. 10-12;
St. Luke xxiv. 52, 53.

FOR awhile the disciples stand intently gazing in mingled amazement and affection and grief. But already He has sent His Angels with heavenly comfort and guidance also, lest in sorrow duty should be neglected. He is gone. But His work lies before them. Life is not to be spent in trying to fathom the hidden mysteries of God. Heaven is not to be won by gazing upward. The way to glory lies through loving service.

And He who is taken up is not lost for ever. This same Jesus, the Crucified, the Glorified, shall return again to them that look for Him. The same, true Son of Man, our Brother, to be recognised by us as well as by the scars of His Passion as by the brightness of the Father's Glory. When He shall come, we know not. But in some sense this His promise must be fulfilled to every one of us:

‘Behold, I come quickly, and My Reward is with Me.’ Therefore the Church, His Spouse, cries to her Heavenly Bridegroom, ‘Even so come, Lord Jesus.’ Rev. xxii. 20.

And they worshipped Him. Unseen by human eye, seated in glory above all Heavens, adored by the countless choirs of unfallen Angels, can He at that moment care for their worship? Yes; they worship Him, though their eyes behold Him not; for their faith sees Him and tells them that He sees them. They worship Him, though so highly exalted; for they know Him, not only by the Angels’ message, but by their own hearts, to be the same Jesus, loving His own unto the end. They worship Him; for He is their God.

Then began the worship of Jesus from the Church on earth, never to end. Angels in Heaven had from Eternity worshipped Him as God; now Angels and men alike worship Him as the Christ, God and Man. Prayer shall be made ever unto Him, and daily shall He be praised. Ps. lxxii. 15. And whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved. From that day to this, and ever more, Heaven and Earth shall rejoice in His Name. To Him with the Father and the Holy Ghost will we address our prayer and praise, magnifying Him, and worshipping His Name, ever world without end.

If they sorrowed for a little while, their sorrow was soon ended. Even as He had promised. St. John xvi. 20. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, to wait for that last great gift which was to be poured upon them not many days hence. To the world’s eyes they might seem orphaned and comfortless. The men of Jerusalem would look upon them as hopelessly deceived, disappointed

followers of One whose body they had stolen away from its sepulchre in their shame and despair. But for them, their thoughts were full of Heaven, looking forward to the beginning of a ministry which should shake and ruin the formal exclusiveness of the Jew, the selfishness and darkness of the Gentile ; which should bring light and life and peace to every soul in God's wide earth. Few they were, not more than a hundred and twenty in Jerusalem, poor and untaught for the most part. But He was with them to make up for their fewness ; He had taught them the Mysteries of Salvation, and would teach them yet more. What now could hurt or shake them, or take away their joy ? They were His, and He was theirs ; and in Him they had all things. They were Christ's, and Christ was God's. 1 Cor. iii. 23.

And they were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour Thy grace into our hearts ; that as we have known the Incarnation of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, by the message of an Angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of His Resurrection ; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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